**Title**: Olive in Italy

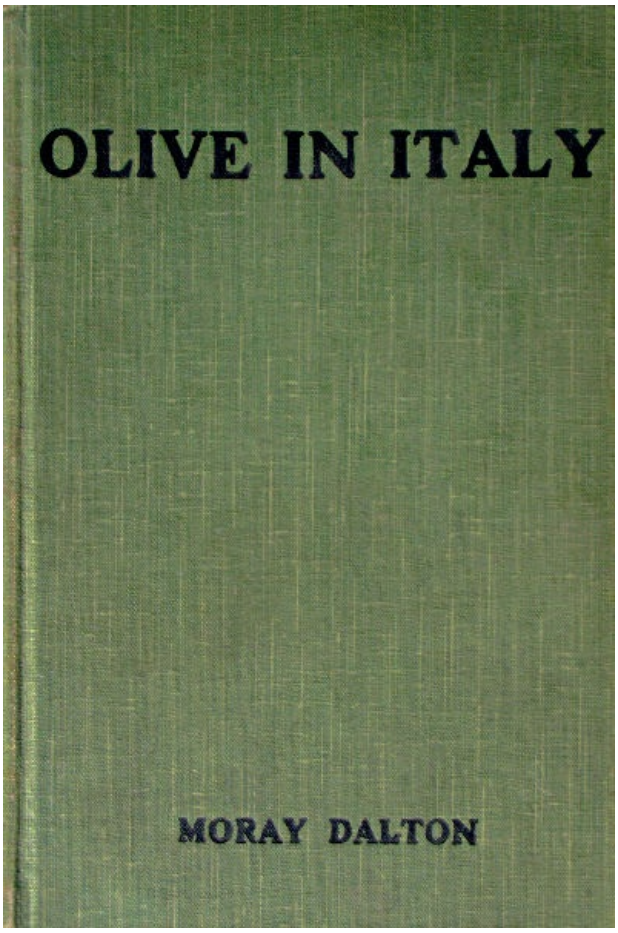
**Author**: Moray Dalton

**Release Date**: July 25, 2009 [EBook #29512]

**Language**: English

**Credits**: Produced by Mark C. Orton, Sam W. and the Online Distributed Proofreading Team at https://www.pgdp.net






# OLIVE ... IN ITALY

By MORAY DALTON

London
**T. FISHER UNWIN**
MCMIX



---

"For in the hand of the Lord there is a cup, and the wine is red; it is full mixed, and He poureth out of the same. As for the dregs thereof: all the ungodly of the earth shall drink them...."

---

# CONTENTS

[xv]



---

[17]

# OLIVE IN ITALY

# BOOK I.—SIENA

## CHAPTER I

“I believe that Olive Agar is going to tell you that she can’t pay her bill,” said the landlady’s daughter as she set the breakfast tray down on the kitchen table.

“Good gracious, Gwen, how you do startle one! Why?”

“She began again about the toast, and I told her straight that you always set yourself against any unnecessary cooking. Meat and vegetables must be done, I said, but those who can’t relish bread as it comes from the baker’s, and plain boiled potatoes, can go without, I said. Then she says, of course I must do as my mother tells me, and would I ask you to step up and see her presently.”

“Perhaps you were a bit too sharp with her.”

The girl sniffed resentfully. “Good riddance if she goes,” she called after her mother.

Mrs Simons knocked perfunctorily at the dining-room door.

A young voice bade her come in. “I wanted to tell you that I heard from my cousins in Italy this [18]
morning. I am going to stay with them for a little, so I shall be leaving you at the end of the week.”

The landlady’s cold stare was disconcerting. There was a distinct note of disapproval in her voice as she answered, “I do not know much about Italy.” She seemed to think it not quite a seemly subject, yet she pursued it. “I should have thought it was better for a young lady without parents or friends to find some occupation in her own country.”

Olive smiled. “Ah, but I hate boiled potatoes, and I think I shall love Italy and Italian cooking. You remember the Athenians who were always seeking some new thing? They had a good time, Mrs Simons.”

“I hope you may not live to wish those words unsaid, miss,” the woman answered primly. “You have as good as sold your birthright, as Esau did, in that speech.”

“He was much nicer than Jacob.”

“Oh, miss, how can you! But, after all, I suppose you are not altogether one of us since you have foreign cousins. What’s bred in the bone comes out in the flesh they say.”

“I am quite English, if that is what you mean. My aunt married an Italian.”

Mrs Simons’s eyes had wandered from the girl’s face to the heavy chandelier tied up in yellow muslin, and thence, by way of “Bubbles,” framed in tarnished gilt, to the door. “Ah, well, I shall [19]
take your notice,” she said finally.

She went down again into the kitchen. “I never know where to have her,” she complained. “There’s something queer and foreign about her for all she says. What’s bred in the bone! I said that to her face, and I repeat it to you, Gwendolen.”

Mrs Simons might have added that adventures are to the adventurous. Olive’s father was Jack Agar, of the Agars of Lyme, and he married his cousin. If Mrs Simons had known all that must be implied in this statement she might have held forth at some length on the subject of heredity, and have traced the girl’s dislike of boiled potatoes to her great-great-uncle’s friendship with Lord Byron, and her longing for sunshine to a still more remote ancestress, lady-in-waiting to a princess at the court of Le Roi Soleil.

Adventures to the adventurous! The Agars were always aware of the magnificent possibilities of life and love, and inclined to ignore the unpleasant actualities of existence and the married state; hence some remarkable histories, and, in the end, ruin. Olive was the last of the old name. Jack Agar had died at thirty, leaving his wife and child totally unprovided for but for the little annuity that had sufficed for dress in the far-off salad days, and that now must be made to maintain them. Olive was sent to a cheap boarding-school, where she proved herself a fool at arithmetic; history, [20]
very good; conduct, fair; according to her reports. She was not happy there. She hated muddy walks and ink-stained desks and plain dumpling, and all these things seemed to be an essential part of life at Miss Blake’s.

She left at eighteen, and thereafter she and her mother lived together in lodgings at various seaside resorts within their means, practising a strict economy, improving their minds at the free library, doing their own dressmaking, and keeping body and soul together on potted meats, cocoa and patent cereals. Mary Agar rebelled sometimes in secret, regretting the lack of “opportunities,” *i.e.*, of possible husbands. She would have been glad to see her daughter settled.

The Agars never used commonsense in affairs of the heart. Her own marriage had been very foolish from a worldly point of view, and her sister Alice had run away with her music-master.

"In those days girls had a governess at home and finished with masters, and young Signor Menotti came twice a week to our house in Russell Square to teach Alice the guitar and mandoline. We shared singing and French lessons, but she had him to herself. He was very good-looking, dark, and rather haggard, and just shabby enough to make one sorry for him. When Alice said she would marry him mamma was furious, but she was just of age, and she had a little money of her own, an annuity as I have, and she went her own way. They were married at a [21] registry office, I think, and soon afterwards they went to his home in Italy. Mamma never forgave, but Alice and I used to write to each other, and her eldest child was called after me. I don't know how it turned out. She never said she was unhappy, but she died after eight years, leaving her three little girls to be brought up by their father's sister."

Olive knew little more than this of her aunt. Further questioning elicited the fact that Signor Menotti's name was Ernesto.

"The girls are your cousins, Olive dear, and you have no other relations. I should like to see them."

"So should I."

Olive knew all about the annuity, but she had not realised until her mother died quite suddenly, of heart failure after influenza, what it means to have no money at all. She was dazed with grief at first, and Mrs Simons was as kind as could be expected and did not thrust the weekly bill upon her on the morning after the funeral, though it was due on that day. But lodgers are not supposed to give much trouble, and though death is not quite so heinous as infectious disease or ink spilt on the carpet it is still distinctly not a thing to be encouraged by too great a display of sympathy, and Olive was soon made to understand that it behoved her to seek some means of livelihood, some way out into the world.

No proverb is too hackneyed to be comforting at times, and the girl reminded herself that blood [22] is thicker than water as she looked among her mother's papers for the Menotti address. They were her cousins, birds of a feather. She wrote them a queer, shy, charming letter in strange Italian, laboriously learnt out of a grammar, and then—since some days must elapse before she could get any answer—she conscientiously studied the advertisement columns of the papers. She might be a nursery governess if only she could be sure of herself at long division, or—horrid alternative—a useful help. Mrs Simons suggested a shop.

"You have a nice appearance, miss. Perhaps you would do as one of the young ladies in the drapery department, beginning with the tapes and thread and ribbon counter, you know, and working your way up to the showroom."

But Olive altogether declined to be a young lady.

She waited anxiously for her cousins' letter, and it meant so much to her that when it came she was half afraid to open it.

It was grotesquely addressed to the

Genteel Miss Agar Olive,
Marsden Street, 159,
Brighton,
Provincia di Sussex,
Inghilterra.

The post-mark was Siena. It was stamped on the flap, which was also decorated with a blue bird [23] carrying a rose in its beak, and was rather strongly scented.

"Dear Cousin,—We were so pleased and interested to hear from you, though we greatly regret to have the news of our aunt's death. Our father's sister lives with us since we are orphans. She is a widow and has no children of her own. If you can pay us fifteen lire a week we shall be satisfied, and we will try to get you pupils for English. Kindly let us know the date and hour of your arrival.—Believe us, yours devotedly,

"Maria, Gemma and Carmela."

Olive read it carefully twice over, and then sat down at the table and began to scribble on the back of the envelope. She convinced herself that three times fifteen was forty-five, and that so many lire amounted to not quite two pounds. Then there was the fare out to be reckoned. Finally, she decided that she would be able to get out to Italy and to live there for three weeks before she need call herself penniless.

She went to the window and stood for a while looking out. The houses opposite and all down the road were exactly alike, all featureless and grey, roofed with slate, three-storied, with basement kitchens. Nearly every one of them had “Apartments” in gilt letters on the fanlight over the front door. It was raining. The pavements were wet and there was mud on the roadway. The woman [24] who lived in the corner house was spring-cleaning. Olive saw her helping the servant to take down the curtains in the front room. Dust and tea-leaves and last year’s cobwebs. It occurred to her that spring would bring a recurrence of these things only if she became a useful help, as she must if she stayed in England and earned her living as best she could—only these and nothing more. The idea was horrible and she shuddered at it. “I shall go,” she said aloud. “I shall go.”

---

## CHAPTER II [25]

Olive, advised by a clerk in Cook’s office, had taken a through ticket to Siena, third class to Dover, first on the boat, second in France and Italy. She got to Victoria in good time, had her luggage labelled, secured a corner seat, and, having twenty minutes to spare, strolled round the bookstall, eyeing the illustrated weeklies and the cheap reprints. The blue and gold of a shilling edition of Keats lay ready to her hand and she picked it up and opened it.

The girl, true lover of all beauty, flushed with pleasure at the dear, familiar word music, the sound of Arcadian pipes heard faintly for a moment above the harsh roar of London. For her the dead poet’s voice rose clearly through the clamour of the living; it was like the silver wailing of a violin in a blaring discord of brass instruments.

She laid down the book reluctantly, and turning, met the eager eyes of the man who stood beside her. He had just bought an armful of current literature, and his business at the bookstall was evidently done, yet he lingered for an appreciable instant. He, too, was a lover of beauty, and in his heart he was saying, “Oh, English rose!”

He did not look English himself. He wore his black hair rather longer than is usual in this [26] country, and there was a curiously vivid look, a suggestion of fire about him, which is conspicuously lacking in the average Briton, whose ambition it is to look as cool as possible. His face was thin and his eyes were deep set, like those of Julius Cæsar—in fact, the girl was strongly reminded of the emperor’s bust in the British Museum. He looked about thirty-five, but might have been older.

All this Olive saw in the brief instant during which they stood there together and aware of each other. When he turned away she bought some magazines, without any great regard for their interest or suitability, and went to take her place in the third-class compartment she had selected.

He would travel first, of course. She watched his leisurely progress along the platform, and noted that he was taller than any of the other men there, and better-looking. His thin, clean-shaven face compelled attention; she saw some women looking at him, and was pleased to observe that he did not even glance at them. Then people came hurrying up to the door of her compartment to say good-bye to some of her fellow-travellers, and she lost sight of him.

The train started and passed through the arid wilderness of backyards that lies between each one of the London termini and the clean green country.

Olive fluttered the pages of her magazine, but she felt disinclined to read. She was pretty; her [27] brown hair framed a rose-tinted face, her smile was charming, her blue eyes were gay and honest and kind. Men often looked at her, and it cannot be denied that the swift appraisement of masculine eyes, the momentary homage of a glance that said “you are fair,” meant something to her. Such tributes to her beauty were minor joys, to be classed with the pleasure to be derived from *marrons glacés* or the scent of violets, but the remembrance of them did not often make her dream by day or bring a flush to her cheeks.

She roused herself presently and began to look out of the window with the remorseful feeling of one who has been neglecting an old friend for an acquaintance. After all, this was England, where she was born and where her mother had died, and she was leaving it perhaps for ever. She tried to fix the varying aspects of the spring in her mind for future reference; the tender green of the young larches in the plantation, the pale gold of the primroses, and the flowering gorse close to the line, the square grey towers of the village churches, even the cold, pinched faces of the people waiting on the platforms of the little stations. Italy would be otherwise, and she might never see these familiar things again.

When the train rushed out on to the pier at Dover she dared not look back at the white cliffs, but kept her eyes resolutely seaward. The wind was high, and she heard that the crossing would be [28] rough. Cæsar was close behind her, and she caught a glimpse of him going aft as she made her way to the ladies’ cabin.

She lay down on one of the red velvet divans in the stuffy saloon, and closed her eyes as she had been advised to do, and in ten minutes her misery was complete.

“If you are going to be ill nothing will stop you,” observed the sympathetic stewardess. “It is like Monte Carlo. Most people have a system, and sometimes they win, but they are bound to lose in

the end. Champagne, munching biscuits, patent medicines, lying down as you are now. It is all vanity and vexation of spirit, my dear."

Olive joined feebly in her laugh. "I feel better now. Are we nearly there?"

"Just coming into harbour."

"Thank heaven!"

When Olive crawled up on deck her one idea, after her luggage, was to avoid anyone who had seemed to admire her. She could not bear that the man should see her green face, and she was grateful to him for keeping his distance in the crush to get off the boat, and for disappearing altogether in the station. A porter in a blue linen blouse piloted her to the waiting train, and she climbed into the compartment labelled "Turin," and settled herself in a window seat.

The country between Calais and Paris can only be described as flat, stale and unprofitable by a [29]
beauty lover panting for the light and glow and colour of the South, and Olive soon got a book out of her bag and began to read. Her only fellow-passenger, a middle-aged English lady with an indefinite face, spoke to her presently. "You are reading a French novel?"

"No, it is in Italian. *La Città Morta*, by Gabriele D'Annunzio. I want to rub up my few words of the language."

"Is he not a very terrible writer?"

Olive was so tired of the disapproving note. "He writes very well, and his descriptions are gorgeous. Of course he is horrid sometimes, but one can skip those parts."

"Do you?"

Olive smiled. "No, I do not," she said frankly, "but I don't enjoy them. They make me tired of life."

"Is not that rather a pity?"

"Perhaps; but you have to sift dirt to find diamonds, don't you? And this man says things that are worth tiaras sometimes."

"Surely there must be Italian authors who write books suitable for young people in a pretty style?"

"A pretty style? No doubt. But I don't read them."

The older woman sighed, and then smiled quite pleasantly. "I suppose you are clever. One of my nieces is, and they find her rather a handful. Will you try one of my sandwiches?"

Olive produced her biscuits and bananas, and they munched together in amity. After all, an aunt [30]
might be worse than stupid, and this one was quite good-natured, and so kind that her taste in literature might be excused. There were affectionate farewells at the Paris station, where she got out with all her accumulation of bags and bundles.

The train rushed on through the woods of Fontainebleau and across wide plains intersected by poplar-fringed canals. As the evening mists rose lights began to twinkle in cottage windows, and in the villages the church bells were ringing the prayer to the Virgin. Olive had laid aside her book some time since, and now, wearying of the grey twilit world, she fell asleep.

Jean Avenel, too, had watched the waning of the day from his place in a smoking first for a while, before he got up and began to prowl restlessly about the corridors. "She will be so tired if she does not eat," he said to himself. "They ought not to let a child like that travel alone. I wonder—" He walked down the corridor again, but this time he looked into each compartment. He saw three Englishmen and an American playing whist, Germans eating, and French people sleeping, and at last he came upon his rose. A small man, mean-featured and scrubby-haired, was seated opposite to her, and his shining eyes were fixed upon her face. She had taken off her hat and was holding it on her lap, and Jean saw that she was clutching at it nervously, and that she was pale. He [31]
understood that it was probably her first experience of the Italian stare, deliberate, merciless, and indefinitely prolonged. She flushed as he came forward, and her eyes were eloquent as they met his. He sat down beside her.

"Please forgive me," he said quietly, "but I can see this man is annoying you. Shall I glare him out of the place? I can."

"Oh, please do," she answered. "He has frightened me so. He was talking before you came."

The culprit already looked disconcerted and rather foolish, and now, as Jean leant forward and seemed about to speak to him, he began to be frightened. He fidgeted, thrusting his hands in his pockets, looking out of the window, humming a tune. His ears grew red. He tried to meet the other man's level gaze and failed. He got up rather hurriedly. The brown eyes watched him slinking out before they allowed themselves a second sight of the rose.

"Thank you so much," said Olive. "I feel as if you had killed a spider for me, or an earwig. He was more like an earwig. He must have come in here while I was asleep."

"A deported waiter going back to his native Naples, I imagine," Jean said. "They ought not to have let you travel alone."

She smiled. “I am a law unto myself.”

“That is a pity. Will you think me very impertinent if I confess that I have been watching over you [32]
—at a respectful distance—ever since we left Victoria? I do not approve of children wandering—”

She tilted her pretty chin at him. “Children! So you have made yourself into a sort of G.F.S. for me?”

“You know,” he said gravely, “we have a mutual friend.” He drew a blue and gold volume from an inner pocket.

Olive flushed scarlet, but she only said, “Oh, Keats!”

She looked at his hands as they turned the pages; they were clever and kind, she thought, and she wondered if he was an artist or a doctor. Those fingers might set a butterfly’s wing, and yet they seemed very strong. She did not know she had sighed until he said, “Am I boring you?”

“Oh, no,” she answered eagerly. “Please don’t go yet unless you want to. But tell me why you bought that book?”

“If you could have seen yourself as I saw you, you would understand,” he answered. “I once saw a woman on my brother’s estate pick up a piece of gold on the road. She had never had so much money without earning it in her life before, I suppose. At any rate she kissed it, and her face was radiant. She was old and ugly and worn by her long days of toil in the fields, and you— Well, in spite of the differences you reminded me of her, and I am curious to know which poem of Keats [33]
brought that swift, rapt light of joy.”

“It was ‘White hawthorn and the pastoral eglantine’—”

Jean found the place and marked the passage before returning the book to his pocket. “Now,” he said, “you will come with me and have some dinner.”

---

## CHAPTER III [34]

Many women are shepherded through all life’s journeyings by their men—fathers, brothers, husbands—who look out their trains for them, put them in the care of guards, and shield them from all contact with sulky porters and extortionate cabmen. Olive, who had always to take her own ticket and fight her own and her mother’s battles, now tasted the joys of irresponsibility with Avenel. He compounded with Customs officials, who bowed low before him, he took part in the midnight scramble for pillows at Modane, emerging from the crowd in triumph with no less than three of the coveted aids to repose under his arm, and he saw Olive comfortably settled in another compartment with two motherly German women, and there left her.

At Turin he secured places in the *diretto* to Florence, and sent his man to the buffet for coffee and rolls, and the two broke their fast together.

“Italy and the joy of life,” Olive said lightly, as she lifted her cup, and he looked at her with melancholy brown eyes that yet held the ghost of a smile.

“The passing hour,” he answered; adding prosaically, “This is good coffee.”

Referring to the grey silvery trees whose name she bore he assured her that he did not think she [35]
resembled them. “They are old and you seem eternally young. You should have been called Primavera.”

She laughed. “Ah, if you had been my godfather—”

“I should not have cared to have held you in my arms when you were a bald-headed baby,” he answered with perfect gravity.

Apparently he always said what he thought, but his frankness was disconcerting, and Olive changed the subject.

“Is Siena beautiful?”

“It is a gem of the Renaissance, and you will love it as I do, I know, but I wish you could have seen Florence first. My brother has a villa at Settignano and I am going there now. The fruit trees in the orchard will be all white with blossom. You remember Romeo’s April oath: ‘By yonder moon that tips with silver all these fruit-tree tops—’”

They lunched in the station restaurant at Genoa, and there he bought the girl a basket of fruit. “A poor substitute for the tea you will be wanting presently,” he explained. “You have no tea-basket with you? You will want one if you are going to live with Italians.”

“I never thought of it.”

“May I send you one?” he asked eagerly. “Do let me.”

Olive flushed with pleasure. No one had been so kind to her since her mother died. Evidently he [36]
liked her—oh! he liked her very much. She suddenly realised how much she would miss him when

they parted at Florence and she had to go on alone. It had been so good to be with someone stronger than herself who would take care of her. He had seemed happy too, and she thought he looked younger now than he did when she first saw him standing by the bookstall at Victoria station.

“It is very good of you,” she said. “I should like it. Thank you. I—I shall be sorry to say good-bye.”

He met her wistful eyes gravely. “I should like you to know that I shall never forget this day,” he said. “I shall never cease to be grateful to you for being so—for being what you are. My wife is different.”

“Your wife—”

“I don’t live with her.”

He took a card from his case presently and scribbled an address on it. “I dare not hope that I shall ever hear from you again, but that is my name, and letters will always be forwarded to me from my brother’s place. If ever I could do anything—”

She faltered some word of thanks in an uncertain voice. She felt as if something had come upon her for which she was unprepared, some shadow of the world’s pain, some flame of its fires that flickered at her heart for a moment and was gone. She was suddenly afraid, not of the brown eyes that were fixed so hungrily upon her face, but of herself. She could hear the beating of her [37]
own heart. The pity of it—the pity of it! He was so nice. Why could not they be friends—

The night had fallen long since and they were nearing Florence.

“Don’t forget to change at Empoli,” he said. “I will send my man on as far as that to look after you. Will you let me kiss you?”

“Yes.”

He came over and sat on the seat by her side. “Don’t be afraid. I won’t hurt you,” he said gently, and then, seeing her pale, he drew back. “No, I won’t. It would not be fair. Oh, I beg your pardon! It will be enough for me to remember how good you were.”

The train passed into the lighted station, and he stood up and took his hat and coat from the rack before he turned to her once more.

“Good-bye.”

---

## CHAPTER IV [38]

“Has anyone seen our cousin?” asked Gemma as she helped herself to *spaghetti*.

Her aunt shrugged her fat shoulders. “No! The *donna di servizio* is mistress here, and she has ordained that the cousin shall not be disturbed. She has even locked the door, and she carries the key in her pocket.”

“It is true,” old Carolina said placidly. She was accustomed to join in the conversation at table when she chose, and Italian servants are allowed great freedom of speech. “You were all in your beds when Giovanni Scampo drove her here in his cab this morning or you would have seen her then. The poor child is half dead with fatigue. Let her sleep, I say. There are veal cutlets to come, Signorina Maria; will you have more *spaghetti*?”

“A little more.”

The old woman shook her head. “You eat too much.”

The Menotti lived in a small stuffy flat on the third floor of 25, Piazza Tolomei. It had the one advantage of being central, but was otherwise extremely inconvenient. The kitchen was hot and airless, and the servant had to sleep in a dark cupboard adjoining, in an atmosphere compounded [39]
of the scent of cheese, black beetles and old boots. There were four bedrooms besides, all opening on to the dining-room; and a tiny drawing-room, seldom used and never dusted, was filled to overflowing with gilt furniture and decorative fantasies in wool work.

The Menotti did not entertain. They met their friends at church, or at the theatre, or in the Lizza gardens, where they walked every evening in the summer. No man had ever seen them other than well dressed, but in the house they wore loose white cotton jackets and old skirts. They were *en déshabillé* now, though their heads were elaborately dressed and their faces powdered, and Maria’s waist was considerably larger than it appeared to be when she was socially “visible.”

“I must breathe sometimes,” she said.

The three girls were inclined to stoutness, but Gemma drank vinegar and ate sparingly, and so had succeeded in keeping herself slim hitherto, though she was only three years younger than Maria, who was twenty-nine and looked forty.

Carmela was podgy, but she might lace or not just as she pleased. No one would look at her in any case since her kind, good-humoured, silly face was marked with smallpox.

Gemma was the pride of her aunt and the hope of the family. The girls were poor, and it is hard for such to find husbands, but she had recently become engaged to a young lawyer from Lucca, [40] who had been staying with friends in Siena when he saw and fell in love with the girl whom the students at the University named the “Odalisque.”

Hers was the strange, boding loveliness of a pale orchid. She had no colour, but her curved lips were faintly pink, as were the palms of her soft, idle hands. “I shall be glad when she is married,” her aunt said often. “It is very well for Maria or Carmela to go through the streets alone, but Gemma is otherwise, and I cannot be always running after her. Then her temper … *Dio mio!*”

“Perhaps it is the vinegar,” suggested Carolina rather spitefully.

“No. She wants a husband.”

When the dinner was over Signora Carosi went to her room to lie down, and her two elder nieces followed her example, but Carmela passed into the kitchen with Carolina.

“You will let me see the cousin,” she said, wheedling. “Gemma thinks she will be ugly, with great teeth and a red face like the Englishwomen in the Asino, but I do not believe it.”

“If the signorina is hoping for a miracle of plainness she will be unpleasantly surprised,” said the old woman, and her shrivelled face was as mischievous as a monkey’s as she drew the key of Olive’s room from her pocket. “I am going to take her some soup now, and you shall come with me.”

It is quite impossible to be retiring, or even modest, in the mid-Victorian sense, in flats. A [41] bedroom cannot remain an inviolate sanctuary when it affords the only means of access to the bathroom or is a short cut to the kitchen. Olive had had some experience of suburban flats during holidays spent with school friends, and had suffered the familiarity that breeds weariness in such close quarters. As she woke now she was unpleasantly aware of strangers in the room.

“Only a lover or a nurse may look at a woman while she sleeps without offence,” she said drowsily. “It is an unpardonable liberty in all other classes of the population. Are you swains, or sisters of mercy?” She opened her eyes and met Carmela’s puzzled stare with laughter. “I was saying that when one is ill or in love one can endure many things,” she explained in halting Italian.

“Ah,” Carmela said uncomprehendingly, “I am never ill, *grazia a Dio*, but when Maria has an indigestion she is cross, and when Gemma is in love her temper is dreadful. Perhaps, being a foreigner, you are different. Are you tired?”

“Yes, I am, rather, but go on talking to me. I am not sleepy.”

Carmela, nothing loth, drew a chair to the bedside. “You need not get up yet,” she said comfortably. “We always lie down after dinner until five, and later we go for a walk. You will see the Via Cavour full of people in the evening, officers and students, and mothers with daughters to [42] be married, all walking up and down and looking at each other. Orazio Lucis first saw Gemma like that, and he followed us home, and then found out who we were and asked questions about us. Every day we saw him in the Piazza, smoking cigarettes, and waiting for us to go out that he might follow us, and Gemma would give him one look, and then cast down her eyes … so!” Carmela caricatured her sister’s affectation of unconsciousness very successfully, and looked to Olive and Carolina for applause.

The servant grinned appreciation. “Yes, the signorina is very *civetta*. I, also, have seen her simpering when the *avvocato* has been here, but she soon gets tired of him, and then her face is as God made it.”

Olive dressed herself leisurely when they had left her, and unpacked her clothes and her little store of books. Her cousins, coming to fetch her soon after six o’clock, found her ready to go out, but so absorbed in a guide-book of Siena that she did not hear Maria’s knock at the door.

She had resolved that she would apply art and archæology as plasters to the wound life had given her already. She would stay her heart’s hunger with moods and tenses, but not of the verb “*amare*.” Learning and teaching, she might make her mind lord of her emotions.

She came forward rather shyly to meet her cousins. The three together were somewhat [43] overpowering, flounced and frilled alike, and highly scented. Maria and Carmela fat, pleasant and profuse; Gemma silent, with dark resentful eyes and scornful lips that never smiled at other women.

“You will show me the best things?” Olive said eagerly when they had all kissed her. “I want to see the Duomo first, and then the Palazzo Vecchio—but that is only open in the mornings, is it? And this is the Piazza Tolomei, so the house where Pia lived must be quite near.”

Gemma stared, but made no attempt to answer, and Maria looked confused.

“I am afraid you will find us all very stupid, *cara*,” said Carmela, apologetically. “We only go to the Duomo to pray, and as to museums and picture-galleries— And perhaps I had better tell you now, at once, that we do not want to learn English. We have got you several lessons through friends, but Maria and Carmela say they will not fatigue themselves over a foreign language, and I—”

“Oh,” began Olive, “I thought—”

Gemma interrupted her. “A thousand thanks,” she said rudely. “We are not school children; we read about Pia dei Tolomei years ago at the *Scuola Normale*, but we do not consider her an amusing subject of conversation now.”

The rose in Olive’s cheeks deepened. “I shall soon learn to know your likes and dislikes,” she said, “and to understand your manners.” [44]

“I hope so,” answered Gemma as she left the room. Maria hurried after her, but the younger sister caught at Olive’s hand.

“You must not listen to Gemma. Come, we will walk together. Let her go on; she cannot forgive your nose for being straight.”

---

## CHAPTER V [45]

A large parcel addressed to Miss Agar was brought to the house a few weeks later. Olive was out giving a lesson when it came, and Gemma turned it over, examining the post-mark and the writing.

“Shall I open it and see what is inside? She would never know.”

Carmela was horrified. “How can you think of such a thing!”

“Besides, it is sealed,” added Maria.

These two liked their cousin well enough, and when they wished to tease the Odalisque they called her “*carina*” and praised her fresh prettiness. It was always so easy to make Gemma angry, and lately she had been more capricious and difficult than ever. Her sisters were continually trying to excuse her.

“She is so nervous,” Maria said loyally, but her paraphrase availed nothing. Olive understood her cousin and disliked her extremely, though she accorded her a reluctant admiration.

She came in now with her books—an English grammar and a volume of translations—under her arm, and seeing that Gemma was watching her, she took her parcel with a carefully expressionless phrase of thanks to Carmela, who was anxious to cut the string, and carried it into her room unopened. It was the tea-basket Jean Avenel had promised her. She read the enclosed note, however, before she looked at it. [46]

> “I am going to America and then to Russia. Do not quite forget me. If ever you need anything write to my brother, Hilaire Avenel, Villa Fiorelli, Settignano, near Florence, and he will serve you for my sake as he would for your own if he knew you. I think I have played better since I have known you, my rose. One must suffer much before one can express the divine sorrow of Chopin. I said I would not write, but some promises are made to be broken. Can you forgive me?
>
> “Jean Avenel.”

America and Russia ... the divine sorrow of Chopin ... I have played better.... He was a pianist then, and surely a great one. Olive remembered the slender brown hands that had seemed to her so supple and so strong. But the name of Avenel was strange to her, and she was sure she had never seen it on posters, or in the papers and magazines that chronicle the doings of musical celebrities.

She took the tea-things out of the basket one by one and looked at them with pleasure. The sugar box and the caddy and the spoon were all of silver, and engraved with her initials, and the cup and saucer were painted with garlands of pale roses. [47]

Tears filled her eyes as she sat down at the little table in the window and began to write.

> “You have sent me a tea equipage fit for an empress! It is perfect, and I do not know how to thank you. Yes. I forgive you for writing. Have I really helped you to play? I am so glad. You say Chopin, so I suppose it is the piano? I must tell you that I remember all the stories you told me of Siena, and they add to the interest of my days. I give English lessons, and am making enough money to keep myself, but in the intervals of grammar and ‘*I Promessi Sposi*’ (no less than three of my pupils are translating that interminable romance into so-called English) I study the

> architecture of the early Renaissance in the old narrow streets, and gaze upon Byzantine Madonnas in the churches. The Duomo is an archangel's dream, and I like to go there with my cousins and steep my soul in its beauty while they say their prayers and fan themselves. One of them is pretty and she hates me; the other two are stout and kind and empty-headed, and their aunt is nothing—a large, heavy nothing—"

Olive laid down her pen. "What will he think if I write him eight pages? That I want to begin a correspondence? I do, but he must not know it." [48]

She tore her letter up into small pieces and wrote two lines on a sheet of note-paper.

> "Thank you very much for your kind present and for what you say. Of course I forgive you ... and I shall not forget.—Yours sincerely,
>
> "Olive Agar."

She went to the window and threw the torn scraps of the first letter out into the street, and then she sat down again and began to cry; not for long. Women who know how precious youth is understand that tears are an expensive luxury, and they are sparing of them accordingly. They suffer more in the stern repression of their emotions than do those who yield easily to grief, but they keep their eyelashes and their complexions.

Olive bathed her eyes presently and smoked a cigarette to calm her nerves. She was going out that evening to dine with her favourite pupil and his mother, and she knew they would be distressed if she looked ill or sad.

Aurelia de Sanctis had had troubles enough of her own. She had married a patriot, a man with a beautiful eager face and a body spent with disease, and a fever that never left him since the days when he lurked in the marshes of the Maremma, crouched in a tangle of wet reeds and rushes, and watching for the flash of steel in the sunshine. [49]

Austrian bayonets ... he raved of them in his dreams, and called upon the names of comrades who had rotted in prisons or died in exile. His young wife nursed him devotedly until he died, leaving her a widow at twenty-seven. She had a small pension from the Government, and she worked at dressmaking to eke it out.

Her only child had grown up to be a hopeless invalid. He could not go to school, so he lay all day on the sofa by the window in the tiny sitting-room and helped his mother with her sewing. His poor little bony hands were very quick and dexterous.

In the evenings he read everything he could get hold of, books and newspapers. The professors from the University, who came to see him and were kind to him for his father's sake, told each other that he was a genius and that his soul was eating up his frail body. They wondered, pitifully, what poor Signora Aurelia would do when—

The mother was hopeful, however. "He takes such an interest in everything that I think he must have a strong vitality though he seems delicate," she said.

He had expressed a wish to learn English, and when Signora Aurelia first heard of Olive she wrote asking her to come and see her. The De Sancti lived a little way outside the Porta Romana, on the edge of the hill and outside the town, and Maria advised her cousin not to go there. [50]

"It is so far out on a hot dusty road, and you will grow as thin and dry as an old hen's drumstick if you walk so much. And I know the signora is poor and will not be able to pay well."

Olive went, nevertheless. Signora Aurelia herself opened the door to her and showed evident pleasure at seeing her. The poor woman had been beautiful, and now that she was worn by time and sorrow she still looked like a goddess, exiled to earth, and altogether shabby—a deity in reduced circumstances—but none the less divinely fair and kind. Her great love for her child had so moulded her that she seemed the very incarnation of motherhood. So might Ceres have appeared as she wandered forlornly in search of her lost Persephone, gentle, weary, her fineness a little blunted by her woes.

"Are you the English signorina? Come in! My son will be so pleased," she said as she led the girl into the room where Astorre was working at embroidery.

Olive saw a boy of seventeen sewing as he lay on the sofa. There were some books on the floor within his reach, and a glass of lemonade was set upon the window-sill, but he seemed quite absorbed in making fine stitches. He looked up, however, as they came in and smiled at his mother.

"I have nearly finished," he said. "Presently I shall read the sonnet, '*Pace non trovo, e non ho da far guerra*,' to refresh myself." [51]

“This is the signorina who teaches English, *nino mio*.”

His face lit up at once and he held out his hand. “I have already studied the grammar, but the pronunciation ... ah! that will be hard to learn. Will you help me, signorina?”

“Yes, indeed I will. We will read and talk together, and soon you will speak English better than I can Italian.”

As she spoke and smiled her heart ached to see the hollowness of his cheeks and the lines of pain about his young mouth. She guessed that his poor body was all twisted and deformed under the rug that covered it. Signora Aurelia took her out on to their little terrace garden before she left. Twenty miles and more of fair Tuscan earth lay at their feet, grey olive groves and green vineyards, and the hills beyond all shimmering in the first heat of spring. Olive exclaimed at the beauty of the world.

“Yes. On summer evenings Astorre can lie here and watch what he calls the pageant of the skies. The poor child is so fond of colour. I know you will be very patient with him, signorina. He is so clever, but some days he is in pain, and then he gets tired and so cannot learn so well. You have kindly promised to come twice a week, but I must tell you that I am not rich—” She looked at [52]
Olive wistfully.

The girl dared not offer to teach Astorre for nothing. “I can see your son will be a very good pupil,” she said hastily. “Would one lire the lesson suit you?”

“Oh, yes,” the signora said with evident relief. “But are you sure that is enough? You must not sacrifice yourself, my dear—”

“It will be a pleasure to come,” Olive said very sincerely.

The acquaintance soon ripened into a triangular friendship. The signora grew to love the girl because she amused Astorre and was never obviously sorry for him, or too gentle with him, as were some of the well-meaning people who came to see the boy. “An overflow of pity is like grease exuding,” he said once. “I hate it.”

He was very old for his years. He had read everything apparently, and he discussed problems of life and death with the air of a man of forty. He had no illusions about himself. “I shall die,” he said once to Olive when his mother was not in the room. “My father gave me a spirit that burns like Greek fire and a body like—like a spent shell.”

The easy, desultory lessons were often prolonged, and then the girl stayed to dinner and played dominoes afterwards with him or with his mother until ten o’clock, when old Carolina came to fetch her home. The withered little serving-woman was voluble, and always cheerfully ready to [53]
lighten the way with descriptions of the last moments of her children. She had had thirteen, and two were still surviving. “One grows accustomed, *signorina mia*—”

---

## CHAPTER VI [54]

“You have been crying,” Astorre said abruptly.

Olive leant against the balustrade of the little terrace. She was watching the fireflies that sparkled in the dusk of the vineyards in the valley below. A breeze had risen from the sea at sunset, and it stirred the leaves of the climbing roses and brought a faint sound of convent bells far away. Some stars shone in the clear pale sky.

Dinner had been cleared away, and Signora Aurelia had gone in to finish a white dress she was making for a bride. Olive had offered to help her. “I would rather you amused yourself with Astorre. I can see you are tired,” she had answered as she left them together.

“You have been crying,” the boy repeated insistently.

She smiled at him then. “May I not shed tears if I choose?”

“I must know why,” he answered.

“Oh, a castle in Spain.”

He looked at her searchingly. “And a castellan?”

“Yes. I want a man, and I cannot have him. *Ecco!*”

She did not expect him to take her seriously, but he was often perversely inclined. “Of course,” [55]
he said in a matter-of-fact tone, “all women want a man or men. Do you think I have been lying here all these years without finding that out? That need is the mainspring of life, the key to heaven, and the root of all evil. If—if I were different someone would want me—” His voice broke.

Olive looked away from him. “How still the night is,” she said. “The nightingales are singing in the woods below, Astorre. Do you hear them?”

“I am not deaf,” he answered in a muffled voice, “I hear them. Will you hear me?”

Watching her closely he saw that she shrank from him. “Do not be afraid,” he said gruffly. “I am not going to be a fool. No man on earth is worth your tears. That is all I wanted to say.”

“Ah, child, you are young for all your wisdom. I was not sorry for him but for myself.”

“Liar!” he cried petulantly, and then caught at her hand. “Forgive me! Come now and read me a sonnet of your Keats and then translate it to me.”

Obediently she stooped to pick up the book. The flame of the little lamp on the table at his side burned steadily.

He lay with closed eyes and lips that moved, repeating the words after her. “It is very good to listen to your voice while you are here with me alone under the stars,” he said presently. “Tell me, does this man love you?” [56]

She was silent.

“Does he love you?”

“I think he did, but perhaps he has forgotten me now.”

“I love you,” the boy said deliberately.

“I cannot come again if you talk like this, Astorre.”

“I shall never say it again,” he answered, “but I want you to remember that it is so, because it may comfort you. Such words never come amiss to women. They feed on the hunger of our hearts.”

“Don’t say that!” she cried. “It is true that I like you to be fond of me, and I love you. In the best way, Astorre—oh, do believe that it is the best way!”

“With your soul, I suppose? Do you think I am an angel because I am a cripple?” he asked bitterly.

“I am sorry—”

“Poor little girl,” he said more gently, “I have hurt you instead of comforting you, as I meant to do. But how can I give what is not mine? How can I cry ‘Peace,’ when there is no peace? You will suffer still when I am at rest.”

The boy’s mother put down her work presently and came out to them, and the three sat silently watching the moon rise beyond the hills. It was as though a veil had been withdrawn to show the glimmer of distant streams, the white walls of peasant dwellings set among their vines, the belfry tower of an old Carthusian monastery belted in by tall dark cypresses, and the twisted shadows thrown by the gnarled trunks and outstanding roots of the olive trees. [57]

“All blue and silver,” cried the girl after a while. “Thank God for Italy!”

“She has cost her children dear,” the elder woman answered, sighing. “Beyond that rampart of hills lies the Maremma, and swamps, marshes, forests are to be drained now, they say, and made profitable. You will see some peasants from over there in our streets at the time of the Palio. Poor souls! They are so lean and haggard and yellow that their bones seem to be piercing through their discoloured skins.”

“The Palio! I think Signor Lucis is coming to Siena to see it,” Olive said.

“Is that the man your cousin Gemma is to marry?” the dressmaker asked curiously. “I had heard that she was engaged, but one hears so many things. Do you like her?”

“Not very much, but really I see very little of her. I am out all day teaching.”

The door-bell clanged as the girl rose to go. “That is Carolina come for her stray sheep,” she said, smiling. “They will not believe that I can come home by myself at night.”

“They are quite right. If your aunt’s servant did not come for you I should take you back to the Piazza Tolomei myself.”

“You forget that I am English.” [58]

Olive never attempted to explain her code; she stated her nationality and went on her way. Her first pupils had all been young girls, but as it became known that she was really English her circle widened. The prior of a Dominican convent near San Giorgio, and two privates from a regiment of Lancers stationed in the Fortezza, came to her to be taught, and some of Astorre’s friends, students at the University, were very anxious for lessons, and as the Menotti refused to have them in their house Olive had to hire a room to receive them.

The aunt disapproved. “It is not right,” she said, and when Olive assured her that she could not afford to lose good pupils she shook her large head.

“You will go your own way, I suppose, but do not bring your men here. I cannot have soldiers scratching up the carpet with their spurs, or monks dropping snuff on it.”

Olive’s days were filled, and she, having no time for the self-tormentings of idle women, was content to be not quite unhappy. She needed love and could not rest without it, and she was at

least partially satisfied. Astorre and his mother adored her, thought her perfect, held her dear. All her pupils seemed to like her, and some of the students brought her little gifts of flowers, and packets of chocolate and almond-rock that Maria ate for her. The prior gave her a plaster statuette of St Catherine. “She was clever, and so are you,” he said. [59]

“Carmela, I am not really *antipatica*?”

“What foolishness! No.”

“Why does Gemma hate me then? No one else does, or if they do they hide it, but she looks daggers at me always.”

Carmela had been invited to tea in her cousin’s bedroom. The water did not boil yet, but her mouth was already full of cake.

“What happened the other night when Gemma let you in?” she mumbled.

“Did she say anything to you?”

“No, but I am not blind or deaf. You have not spoken to each other since.”

Olive lifted the kettle off the spirit lamp. “You like it weak, I know.”

“Yes, and three lumps of sugar. Tell me what happened, *cara*.”

“Well, as I came up the stairs that night I noticed a strong scent of tobacco—good tobacco. Sienese boys smoke cheap cigarettes, and the older men get black Tuscan cigars, but this was different. It reminded me of— Oh, well, never mind. When I came to the first landing I felt sure there was someone standing close against the wall waiting for me to go by, and yet when I spoke no one answered. You know how dark it is on the stairs at night. I could not see anything, but I listened, and, Carmela, a watch was ticking quite near me, by my ear. I could not move for a moment, and then I heard Carolina calling—she was with me, you know, but she had gone up first [60] —and I got up somehow. Gemma let us in. She said she had been asleep, and I noticed that her hair was all loose and tumbled. I told her I fancied there was someone lurking on the stairs, and she said it must have been the cat, but I knew from the way she said it that she was angry. She lit her candle and marched off into her own room without saying good-night, and I was sorry because I have always wanted to be friends with her. I thought I would try to say something about it, so I went to her door and knocked. She opened it directly. ‘Go away, spy,’ she said very distinctly, and then I grew angry too. I laughed. ‘So there was a man on the stairs,’ I said.”

Carmela stirred her tea thoughtfully. “Ah!” she said. “How nice these spoons are. I wish you would tell me who gave them to you.”

She helped herself to another cake. “Gemma is difficult, and we shall all be glad when September comes and she is safely married. She is lazy. You have seen us of a morning, cutting out, basting, stitching at her wedding clothes, while she sits with her hands folded. Are you coming out with us this evening?”

The Menotti strolled down to the Lizza nearly every day after the *siesta*, and Carmela often persuaded her cousin to accompany them. The gardens were set on an outlying spur of the hill on [61] which the wolf’s foster son, Remus, built the city that was to be fairer than Rome. The winter winds, coming swiftly from the sea, whipped the laurels into strange shapes, shook the brown seed pods from the bare boughs of the acacias, and froze the water that dripped from the Medicean balls on the old wall of the Fortezza. Even in summer a little breeze would spring up towards sunset, and the leaves that had hung heavy and flaccid on the trees in the blazing heat of noon would be stirred by it to some semblance of life, while the shadows lengthened, and the incessant maddening scream of the locusts died down into silence. The gardens were a favourite resort. As the church bells rang the Ave Maria the people came to them by Camollia and San Domenico, to see each other and to talk over the news of the day.

Smart be-ribboned nurses carrying babies on white silk cushions tied with pink or blue rosettes, young married women with their children, stout mothers chaperoning the elaborate vivacity of their daughters, occupied seats near the bandstand, or lingered about the paths as they chattered and fanned themselves incessantly to the strains of the Intermezzo from *Cavalleria Rusticana* or some march of Verdi’s. A great gulf was fixed between the sexes on these occasions. The young men congregated about the base of Garibaldi’s statue; more or less gilded youths [62] devoted to “le Sport,” wearing black woollen jerseys and perforated cycling shoes, while lady-killers braved strangulation in four-inch collars. There were soldiers too, cavalry lieutenants, slender, erect, and very conscious of their charms, and dark-faced priests, who listened to the music carefully with their eyes fixed on the ground, as being in the crowd but not of it. Olive watched them all with mingled amusement and impatience. If only the boys would talk to their friends’ sisters instead of eyeing them furtively from afar; if only the girls would refrain from useless needlework and empty laughter. They talked incessantly and called every mortal—and immortal—thing *carina*. Queen Margherita was *carina*, and so was the new cross-stitch, and so was this blue-eyed Olive. Yes, they admitted her alien charm. She was *strana*, too, but they did not use that word when she was there or she would have rejoiced over such an enlargement of their vocabulary.

“They are amiable,” she told Astorre, “but we have not one idea in common.”

“Ah,” he said, “can one woman ever praise another without that ‘but’? Do you think them pretty?” he asked.

“Yes, but one does not notice them when Gemma is there.”

“That is the pale one, isn’t it? I have heard of her from the students, and also from the professors of the University. One of my friends raves about her Greek profile and her straight black brows. [63] He calls her his silent Sappho, but I fancy Odalisque is a better name for her. There is no brain or heart, is there?”

“I don’t know,” she answered uncertainly. “She seldom speaks to anyone, never to me.”

“She is jealous of you probably.”

The heats of July tried the boy. He was not so well as he had been in the spring, and lately he had not been able to help his mother with her needlework. The hours of enforced idleness seemed very long, and he watched for Olive’s coming with pathetic eagerness. She never failed to appear on Tuesdays and Saturdays, though the lessons had been given up since his head ached when he tried to learn. Signora Aurelia met her always at the door with protestations of gratitude. “You amuse him and make him laugh, my dear, because you are so fresh, and you do not mind what you say. It is good of you to come so far in the sun.”

The girl’s heart ached to see the haggard young face so white against the dark velvet of the piled-up cushions. The deep grey eyes lit up with pleasure at the sight of her, but she found it hard to meet their yearning with a smile.

Sometimes she found old men sitting with him, grave and potent signiors, professors from the University, who, on being introduced, beamed paternally and asked her questions about Oxford [64] and Cambridge. There were bashful youths too, who blushed when she entered and rose hurriedly with muttered excuses. If they could be induced to stay, Olive, seeing that it pleased Astorre to see them shuffling their feet and writhing on their chairs in an agony of embarrassment before her, did her best to make them uncomfortable.

“Your friends are all so timid,” she said. He looked at her with a kind of triumph, a pride of possession.

“They do not understand you as I do. Fausto admires you, but you frighten him.”

“Is he Gemma’s adorer?” she asked with a careful display of indifference.

“Yes, he is always *amoroso*.”

“Ah! Does he smoke?”

“Yes. Why?”

“Oh, nothing,” she said. She did not really believe that the man on the stairs could have been Fausto. Gemma would not look twice at such a harmless infant now. When she was forty-five, perhaps, she might smile on boys, but at twenty-six—

---

## CHAPTER VII [65]

Olive sat in her little bedroom correcting exercises.

It was the drowsy middle of the afternoon and the heat was intense. All the grey-green and golden land of Tuscany lay still and helpless at the mercy of the sun. The birds had long ceased singing, and only the thin shrilling of the locusts broke the August silence. The parched earth was pale, and great cracks that only the autumn rains could fill had opened on the hillsides, but the ripening maize lay snug within its narrow sheaths of green, and the leaves of the vines hid great bunches of purpling grapes. In the fields men rested awhile from their labours, and the patient white oxen stood in the shade of the mulberries, while the sunburnt lads who drove them bathed their tired bodies in the stream, or lay idly in the lush grass at the water’s edge.

In the town the walls of houses that had fronted the morning sun were scorching to the touch, and there was no coolness even in the steep northward streets that were always in shadow, or in the grey stone-paved courts of the palaces. There were few people about at this hour, and the little stream of traffic had run dry in the Via Cavour. A vendor of melons drew his barrow close [66] up to the battered old column in the Piazza Tolomei, and squatted down on the ground beside it. “*Cocomeri! Fresc’ e buoni!*” he cried once or twice, and then rolled over and went to sleep. A peasant girl carrying a basket of eggs passed presently, and she looked wistfully at the fruit, but she did not disturb his slumbers.

“Is that the aunt of your friend’s mother? No, it is the sister of my niece’s governess.” Olive laid down her pen. She was only partially dressed and her hair hung loosely about her bare white shoulders. The heat made hairpins seem a burden and outer garments superfluous. “My niece’s governess is the last. Thank Heaven for that!” she said, and she sat down on the brick floor to take off her stockings. Gemma’s *fidanzato*, her lawyer from Lucca, was coming to Siena for a week. He would lodge next door and come in to the Menotti for most of his meals, and already

poor old Carolina was busy in the hot, airless kitchen, beating up eggs for a *zabajone*, and Signora Carosi had gone out to buy ice for the wine and sweet cakes to be handed round with little glasses of *vin* Santo or Marsala.

Carmela came into her cousin's room soon after four o'clock. "I have just taken Gemma a cup of black coffee. Her head aches terribly."

"I heard her moving about her room in the night," Olive answered, and she added, under her [67]
breath, "Poor Gemma!"

Carmela lowered her voice too. "Of course Maria and I know that you see what is going on as well as we do. There is some man ... she lets down a basket from her window at nights for letters, and I believe she meets him when my aunt thinks she has gone to Mass. It is dreadful. How glad we shall be when she is safely married and away."

"Who is the man?"

"Hush! I don't know. Do you hear the beating of a drum? One of the *Contrade* is coming."

The two girls ran to the window, and Olive opened the green shutters a little way that they might see out without being seen. The day of the Palio was close at hand, and the pages and *alfieri* of the rival parishes, whose horses were to run in the race, were already going about the town. Olive never tired of watching the flash of bright colours as the flags were flung up and deftly caught again, and she cried out now with pleasure as the little procession moved leisurely across the piazza.

"I wonder why they come here," Carmela said, as the first *alfiero* let the heavy folds of silk ripple about his head, twisted the staff, seemed to drop it, and gathered it to him again easily with his left hand. The page stood aside with a grave assumption of the gilded graces of the thirteenth [68]
century. He was handsome in his dress of green and white and scarlet velvet.

"Why does he look up here?"

Olive laughed a little. "He is the son of the cobbler who mends my boots," she whispered. "He is trying to learn English and I have lent him some books, and that is why he has come to do us honour. I think it is charming of him."

She took a white magnolia blossom from a glass dish on her table. "Shall I be mediæval too?"

The boy raised smiling eyes as the pale flower came fluttering down to him. One of the *alfieri* laughed aloud.

"*O Romeo, sei bello!*"

"*Son' felice!*" he answered, and he kissed the waxen petals ardently.

Olive softly clapped her hands together. "Is he not delicious! What an actor! Oh, Italy!"

Now that the performance was over the *alfieri* strolled across the piazza to the barrow that was still drawn up by the column. "*Cocomeri! Fresc' e buoni!*"

"I never know what will please you," Carmela said as she sat down. "But foreigners always like the Palio. You will see many English and Americans and Germans on the stands."

"Yes, I love it all. Yesterday I passed through the Piazza del Campo and saw the workmen putting [69]
palings all about the centre, and hammering at the stands, while others strewed sand on the course and fastened mattresses to the side of the house by San Martino."

"Ah, the *fantini* are often thrown there and flung against the wall. If there were no mattresses ... crack!" Carmela made a sound as of breaking bones and hummed a few bars of Chopin's *Marche Funèbre*.

Olive shuddered. "You are an impressionist, Carmela. Two dabs of scarlet and a smear—half a word and a shrug of the shoulders—and you have expressed a five-act tragedy. I think you could act."

"Oh, I am not clever; I should never be able to remember my part."

"You would improvise," Olive was beginning, when Carmela sprang up and ran to the window again.

"It is Orazio!" she cried. "He has come in a cab."

The *vetturino* had pulled his horse up with a jerk of the reins after the manner of his kind; the wretched animal had slipped and he was now beating it about the head with the butt end of his whip. His fare had got out and was looking on calmly.

Olive hastily picked up one of her shoes and flung it at them. It struck the *vetturino* just above the ear. "A nasty crack," she said. "His language is evidently frightful. It is a good thing I can't [70]
understand it, Carmela."

She looked down at the angry, bewildered men, and the *vetturino*, catching a glimpse of the flushed face framed in a soft fluff of brown hair, shook his fist and roared a curse upon it.

“Touch that horse again and I’ll throw a jug of boiling water over you,” she cried as she drew the green shutters to; and then, in quite another tone, “Oh, Giovanni, be good. What has the poor beast ever done to you?” She turned to Carmela. “I know him. His wife does washing for Signora Aurelia,” she explained.

A slow grin overspread the man’s heavy face as he rubbed his head.

“Mad English,” he said, and then looked closely at the coin the Lucchese had tendered him.

“Your legal fare,” Orazio began pompously.

“Santo Diavolo—”

“I am a lawyer.”

“*Si capisce!* Will you give the signorina her shoe?” He handed it to Orazio, who took it awkwardly.

“The incident is closed,” Olive said as she came back to her cooling tea. “I hope there is a heaven for horses and a hell for men. Oh, how I hate cruelty! Carmela, if that is Orazio I must say I sympathise with Gemma. How could any woman love a mean, narrow-shouldered, whitey-brown paper thing like that?”

“It is a pity,” sighed Carmela as she moved towards the door. “But after all they are all alike in [71]
the end. I must go now to help Maria lace. I pull a little, and then wait a few minutes. *È un martirio!*”

“Why does she do it?”

“Why does an ostrich bury its head in the sand? Why does a camel try to get through the eye of a needle? (But perhaps he does not.) I often tell her fat cannot be hidden, but she will not believe.”

When Olive went into the *salotto* a few minutes before seven she found the family assembled. Signor Lucis rose from his place at Gemma’s side as the aunt uttered the introductory formula. He brought his heels together and bowed stiffly from the waist, and when Olive gave him her hand in English fashion he took it limply and held it for a moment before he dropped it. His string-coloured moustache was brushed up from a loose-lipped mouth, and he showed bad teeth when he smiled.

“The signorina speaks Italian?”

“Oh, yes.”

“Ah, does she come from London?”

“I had no settled home in England.”

“Ah! The sun never shines there?”

She laughed. “Not as it does here,” she admitted. “Where is my shoe?”

“It was yours then?” he said with an attempt at playfulness. “Gemma has been quite jealous of
the unknown owner, but she says it is much larger than any of hers.” The girls’ eyes met but [72]
neither spoke, and Orazio babbled on, unheeding: “Her feet are *carini*, and I can span her ankle with my thumb and forefinger; but you are small made too, signorina.”

Carolina poked her head in at the door. “*Al suo comodo è pronto*,” she said, referring to the dinner, and hurried away again to dish up the veal cutlets.

The young man contrived to remain behind in the *salotto* for a moment and to keep Gemma with him. Olive looked at them as they took their places at table, and she understood that the girl had had to submit to some caress. She looked sick and her lips were quite white, and if Lucis had been a man of quick perceptions he would have realised, her face must have shown him, that she loathed him. He was dense, however, and though he commented on her silence later on it was evident that he attributed it to shyness.

Olive, thinking to do well, flung herself into the conversational breach. Her cousins had nothing to say, and the aunt’s thoughts were set on the dinner and cumbered with much serving. So she talked to him as in duty bound, and he seemed inclined to banter her.

Her feet, her temper, her relations with *vetturini*. He was execrable, but she would not take offence.

After dinner they all sat in the little *salotto* until it was time to go to the theatre, and still Olive [73]
talked and laughed with Orazio, teaching him English words and making fun of his pronunciation of them. Gemma watched her sombrely and judged her by her own standards, and Carmela caught at her cousin’s arm presently as they passed down the crowded Via Cavour together.

“Why did you make her so angry? She will always hate you now. I did not know you were *civetta*.”

Olive looked startled. “Angry? What do you mean?”

“Why did you speak so much to Orazio? Gemma thought you wanted to take her husband from her and she will not forgive.”

“Why, I could see it made her ill to look at him and that she shrank from his touch, and I did as I would be done by. I distracted his attention.”

Carmela laughed in spite of herself. “Oh, Olive, and I thought you were so clever. Do you not understand that one can be jealous of a man one does not love? I know that though I am stupid. All Italians are jealous. You must remember that.”

“I am sorry,” Olive said ruefully after a pause. “I see you are right. She will never believe that I wanted to help her. If only you could persuade her to give up Orazio. Surely the other man would come forward then. You and Maria talk of getting her safely married and away, but I see farther. There can be no safety in union with the wrong man—”

Carmela shook her head. “She wants a husband,” she said stolidly, “and Orazio will make a good one. You do not understand us, my dear. You can please yourself with dreams and fancies, but we are different.” [74]

---

## CHAPTER VIII [75]

Olive was careful to sit down with Carmela on one side of their box on the second tier, leaving two chairs in front for the *fidanzati*, but the young man made several efforts to include her in the conversation and she understood that she had put herself in a false position. Orazio had misunderstood her because her manners were not the manners of Lucca, and he knew no others. It annoyed her to see that he plumed himself on his conquest, but her sense of humour enabled her to avoid his glances with a good grace, especially as she realised that she had brought them on herself.

She felt nothing but pity for her cousin now. It would be terrible to marry a man like that, she thought, and she wondered that so many women could rush in where angels feared to tread. She believed that there were infinite possibilities of happiness in the holy state of matrimony, but it seemed to her that perhaps the less said of some actualities the better.

Carmela was right. At this time she pastured on dreams and fancies. Her emotions were not starved, but they were kept down and only allowed to nibble. She thought often of the man who had been kind to her, and sometimes she wished that he had kissed her. It would have been something to remember. Often, if she closed her eyes, she could almost cheat herself into believing him there close beside her, his brown gaze upon her, his lips quivering with a strange eagerness that troubled her and yet made her glad. Jean Avenel. It was a good name. [76]

He had gone to America and she assured herself that he must have forgotten her, but she did not try to forget him. She nursed the little wistful sorrow for what might have been, as women will, and would not bind up the scratch he had inflicted. Already she had learned that some pain is pleasant, and that a stinging sweetness may be distilled from tears. Sometimes at night, when it was too hot to sleep and she lay watching the fine silver lines of moonlight passing across the floor, she asked herself if she would see him again, and when, and how, and wove all manner of cobweb fancies about what might be.

She ripened quickly as fruit ripens in the hot sunshine of Italy; her lips were more sweetly curved and coloured, and her blue eyes were shadowed now. They were like sapphires seen through a veil.

Maria gave her the opera-glasses and she raised them to scan the house. It was a gala night and the theatre was hung with flags and brilliantly illuminated. There were candles everywhere, and the great chandelier that hung from the ceiling was lit. The heat was stifling, and the incessant fluttering of fans gave the women in the *parterre* and in the crowded boxes a look of unrest that was belied by their placid, expressionless faces. Many glanced up at the Menotti in their box. There was some criticism of Gemma’s Lucchese. [77]

“He is ugly, but she could not expect to get a husband here where she is so well known. They say —”

“The Capuan Psyche and a rose from the garden of Eden,” said a man in the stage box, who had discerned Olive’s fresh, eager prettiness beyond the pale beauty of the Odalisque.

He handed the glasses to his neighbour. “Choose.”

“The *rôle* of Paris is a thankless one; it involved death in the end for the shepherd prince.”

“Yes, but you are not a shepherd prince.”

The man addressed was handsome as a faun might be and as a tiger is. Not sleek, but lean and brown, with hot, insolent eyes and a fine and cruel mouth. A great emerald sparkled on the little finger of his left hand. He was one of the few in the house who wore evening dress, and he was noticeable on that account, but he had been standing talking with some other men at the back of his box hitherto. He came forward now and Gemma saw him. Her set lips relaxed and seemed to redden as she met his bold, lifted gaze, but as his eyes left hers and he raised his glasses to stare past her at Olive her face contracted so that for the moment she was almost ugly. [78]

The performance was timed to begin at nine, but at twenty minutes past the hour newsvendors were still going to and fro with bundles of evening papers, and the orchestra was represented by a melancholy bald-headed man with a cornet. The other musicians came in leisurely, one by one, and at last the conductor took his place and the audience settled down and was comparatively quiet while the Royal March was being played. The orchestra had begun the overture to *Rigoletto* when some of the men who stood in the packed arena behind the *palchi* cried out and their friends in other parts of the house joined in. They howled like wolves, and for a few minutes the uproar was terrific, and Verdi's music was overwhelmed by the clamour of voices until the conductor, turning towards the audience, said something inaudible with a deprecating bow and a quick movement of his hands.

"*Ora, zitti!*" yelled a voice from the gallery.

Silence was instant, and the whole house rose and stood reverently, listening to a weird and confused jumble of broken chords that yet could stir the pulses and quicken the beating of young hearts.

Olive had risen with the rest. "What is it?" she whispered to Maria.

"Garibaldi's Hymn."

It seemed a red harmony of rebellious souls, climbing, struggling, clutching at the skirts of [79]
Freedom. The patter of spent shot, the heavy breathing of hunted fugitives, the harsh crying of dying men, the rush of feet that stumbled as they came over the graves of the Past; all these sounds of bygone strife rang, as it were, faintly, beyond the strange music, as the sea echoes, sighing, in a shell.

Signora Aurelia had told Olive how in the years before Italy was free and united under the king, when Guiseppe Verdi was a young man, the students would call his name in the theatre until the house rang to the cry of "*Viva Verdi! Viva Verdi!*" A little because they loved their music-maker, more because V. E. R. D. I. meant Vittor Emanuele, Re D'Italia, and they liked to sing his forbidden praises in the very ears of the white-coat Austrians.

They had their Victor. Had he not sufficed? Olive knew that the authorities scarcely countenanced the playing of the Republican hymn. Was it because it made men long for some greater ruler than a king, or for no ruler at all? Freedom is more elusive even than happiness. Never yet has she yielded herself to men, though she makes large promises and exacts sacrifices as cruel as ever those of Moloch could have been. Her altars stream with blood, but she ... she is talking, or she is pursuing, or she is on a journey, or peradventure she sleepeth ... and her [80]
prophets must still call upon her and cut themselves with knives.

As the curtain went up Olive leant forward that she might see the stage. It was her first opera. Music is a necessity in Italy, but in England it is a luxury, and somehow she and her mother had never been able to afford even seats in the gallery at Covent Garden.

Now all her thoughts, all her fancies, were swept away in the flood of charming melody. The story, when she understood it, shocked and repelled her. It seemed strange that crime should be set to music, and that one should have to see abduction, treachery, vice, and a murder brutally committed in full view of the audience, while the tenor sang the lightest of all his lyrics: "*La donna è mobile*."

Gemma asked for an ice during the second *entr'acte*, and Orazio hurried out to get one for her at the buffet. The girl looked tired, but she was kind to her lover in her silent, languid way, listening to his whispered inanities, and allowing him to hold her hand, though her flesh shrank from the damp clamminess of his grasp, and she hated his nearness and wished him away.

The man who sat alone now in the stage box could see no flaw in her composure, and she seemed to him as perfectly calm as she was perfectly beautiful, though he had noticed that not once had she looked towards the stage. She kept her eyes down, and they were shadowed by the long black lashes. Ah, she was beautiful! The man's lean brown face was troubled and he sighed under [81]
his breath. He went out in the middle of the third act, and he did not come back again.

After a while Gemma moved restlessly. "Orazio, *per carità*! Your hand is so hot and sticky! I shall change places with Carmela," she said. She released her fingers from the young man's grasp with the air of one crushing a forward insect or removing a bramble from the path, and she actually beckoned to her sister to come.

Orazio flushed red and he seemed about to speak as Carmela rose from her seat, but the aunt interposed hurriedly.

"Sit still, Gemma, you are tired or you would not speak so. The lights hurt your eyes and make your head ache."

"Yes, I am tired," the girl said wearily. "I slept ill last night. Forgive me, Orazio, if I was cross. I am sorry."

Her dull submission touched Olive with a sudden sense of pity and of fear, but Orazio was blind and deaf to all things written between the lines of life, and he could not interpret it.

"I do not always understand you," he said stiffly, and he would not relax until presently she drew nearer to him of her own accord.

## CHAPTER IX [82]

The Vicolo dei Moribondi is the narrowest of all the steep stone-paved streets that lead from the upper town to the market-place of Siena, and the great red bulk of the Palazzo Pubblico overshadows it. Olive had come that way once from the Porta Romana, and seeing the legend: "*Affitasi una camera*" displayed in the doorway of one of the shabby houses, had been moved to climb the many stairs to see the room in question.

It proved to be a veritable eyrie, large, bare, passably clean, and very well lighted. From the window she saw the hillside below the church of San Giuseppe, a huddle of red roofs and grey olive orchards melting into a blue haze of distance beyond the city walls, and the crowning heights of San Quirico. Leaning out over the sill of crumbling stone she looked down into the Vicolo as into a well.

The rent was very low, and the woman who had the room to let seemed a decent though a frowsy old soul, and so the matter was settled there and then, and Olive had left the house with the key of her new domain in her pocket.

She had bought a table and two chairs and a shelf for her books at a second-hand furniture shop near the Duomo, and had given her first lesson there two days later, and soon the quiet place [83] seemed more like home to her than the stuffy flat in the Piazza Tolomei. What matter if she came to it breathless from climbing five flights of stairs? It was good to be high up above the stale odours of the streets. The window was always open. There were no woollen mats to be faded or waxen fruits to be melted by the sun's heat. A little plaster bust of Dante stood on the table, and Olive kept the flowers her pupils gave her, pink oleander blossoms and white roses from the terrace gardens, in a jar of majolica ware, but otherwise the place was unadorned.

"It is like a convent," Carmela said when she came there with Maria and her aunt for an English tea-drinking.

Signora Carosi had sipped a little tea and eaten a good many of the cakes Olive had bought from the *pasticceria*. "The situation is impossible," she remarked, as she brushed the crumbs off her lap.

"The stairs are a drawback," Olive admitted, not without malice, "but fortunately my pupils are all young and strong."

"You are English. I always say that when I am asked how I can permit such things. 'What would you? She teaches men grammar alone in an attic. I cannot help it. She is English.'"

Gemma had been asked to come too on this occasion, but she had excused herself. She so often had headaches when the others were going out, and they would leave her lying down in her [84] room. When they came back she was always up and better, and yet she seemed feverish and strange. Then sometimes of a morning, when Maria and the aunt had gone out marketing, and Carmela, shapeless and dishevelled in her white cotton jacket, was dusting or ironing, the beautiful idle sister would come out of her room, dressed for the street and carrying a prayer-book. Carmela would remonstrate with her. "You are not going alone?"

"Only to mass."

On the morning of the fifteenth of August she did not go with the others to the parish church at six o'clock, but she was up early, nevertheless. She wrote a letter, and presently, having sealed it, she dropped it out of the window. A boy who had been lingering about the piazza since dawn, and staring up at the close-shuttered fronts of the tall houses, picked it up and ran off with it. When Maria and Carmela came back with their aunt soon after seven they drank their black coffee in the kitchen before going to their rooms to rest. Carolina took Olive's breakfast in to her on a tray when they were gone. The English girl had milk with her coffee and some slices of bread spread with rancid butter. Gemma lay in wait for the old woman and stopped her as she came from the kitchen.

"Find out what she is going to do to-day," she whispered.

Carolina nodded and her shrivelled monkey face was puckered into a smile. She came back [85] presently. "She is going to the Duomo and then to *colazione* with the De Sancti. She will go with Signora Aurelia to see the Palio and only come back here to supper."

Gemma went back to her room to finish her dressing. She put on a pink muslin frock and a hat of white straw wreathed with roses and leaves. Surely her beauty should avail to give her all she desired, light and warmth always, diamonds and fine laces, and silks to clothe her and give her grace, and the possession of the one man's heart, with his name and a place in the world beside him. Surely she was not destined to live with Orazio and his tiresome mother, penned up in a shabby little house in Lucca, and there growing old and hideous. She sat before her glass thinking these thoughts and waiting until she heard Olive's quick, light step in the passage and then the opening and shutting of the front door. Carolina was in the kitchen and the others had gone to lie down, but she went into the dining-room and listened for a moment there before she ventured into her cousin's room. She had often been in to pry when alone in the flat, and she knew where to look for the key of the attic in the Vicolo. Olive always kept it in a corner of the

table drawer and it was there now. Gemma smiled her rare slow smile as she put it in her purse. There was a photograph of her aunt—Olive's mother—on the dressing-table, and a Tauchnitz [86] edition of Swinburne's *Atalanta in Calydon* lay beside it, the embroidered tassel of the marker being one of Astorre's pitiful little gifts. She swept them off on to the floor and poured the contents of the ink-stand over them. She had acted on a spiteful impulse, and she was half afraid when she saw the black stream trickling over the book and blotting out the face of the woman who had been of her kin. It seemed unlucky, a *malore*, and she was vexed with herself. She looked into the kitchen on her way out. "Carolina, if they ask where I am I have gone to church."

The old woman nodded. "Very well, signorina, but you are becoming too devout. *Bada, figlia mia!*"

Siena is a city dedicated to the Virgin, and the feast of her Assumption is the greatest of all her red-letter days. The streets had echoed at dawn to the feet of *contadini* coming in by the Porta Romana, the Porta Camollia, the Porta Pespini. The oxen had been fed and left in their stalls; there was no ploughing in the fields on this day, no gathering of figs, no sound of singing voices and laughter in the vineyards. The brown wrinkled old men and women, the lithe, slender youths in their suits of black broadcloth—wood gods disguised by cheap tailoring—all had left their work and come many a mile along the dusty roads and across fields to the town for the dear Madonna's sake, and to see the Palio. The country girls had all new dresses for the *Ferragosto* and they [87] strutted in the Via Cavour like little pigeons pluming themselves in the sunshine. They were nearly all pretty, and the flapping hats of Tuscan straw half hid and half revealed charming curves of cheek and chin, little tip-tilted noses, soft brown eyes. Many of the townsfolk were out too on this day of days and the streets were crowded with gay, vociferous people. There was so much to see. The old picture-gallery was free to all, and the very beggars might go in to see the sly, pale, almond-eyed Byzantine Madonne in their gilt frames, and Sodoma's tormented Christ at the Pillar with the marks of French bullets in the plaster. All the palaces too were hung with arras, flags fluttered everywhere, church bells were ringing.

Gemma passed down a side street and went a little out of her way to avoid the Piazza del Campo, but she had to cross the Via Ricasoli, and the crowd was so dense there that she was forced to stand on a doorstep for a while before she could get by.

"What are they all staring at?" she asked impatiently of a woman near her.

"It is the horse of the *Montone*! They are taking him to be blessed at the parish church."

The poor animal was led by the *fantino* who was to ride him in the race, and followed by the page. He was small and lean and grey, with outstanding ribs and the dry scar of an old wound on his flank. The people eyed him curiously. "An ugly beast!" "Yes, but you should see him run when [88] the cognac is in him."

Gemma began to be afraid that she would be late, and that He might find the door shut and go away again, and she pushed her way through the crowd and hurried down the Vicolo and into the house numbered thirteen. She was very breathless, being tightly laced and unused to so many stairs, and she stumbled a little as she crossed the threshold. She was glad to sit down on one of the chairs by the open window. The bare room no longer seemed conventual now that its unaccustomed air was stirred by the movement of her fan and tainted by the faint scent of her violet powder.

Outside, in the market-place, the country women were sitting in the shade of their enormous red and blue striped umbrellas beside their stalls of fruit, while the people who came to buy moved to and fro from one to the other, beating down prices, chaffering eagerly with little cries of "*Per carità!*" and "*Dio mio!*" shrugging their shoulders, moving away, until at last the peasants would abate their price by one soldo. A clinking of coppers followed, and the green peaches and small black figs would be pushed into a string bag with a bit of meat wrapped in a back number of the *Vedetta Senese*, a half kilo of *pasta*, and perhaps a tiny packet of snuff from the shop where they sell salt and tobacco and picture postcards of the Pope and La Bella Otero.

In the old days the scaffold and the gallows had been set up there, and the Street of the Dying [89] had earned its name then, so many doomed wretches had passed down it from the Justice Hall and the prisons to the place of expiation. Weighed down by chains they had gone reluctantly, dragging their feet upon their last journey, trying to listen to the priest's droning of prayers, or to see some friendly face in the crowd.

The memory of old sorrows and torments lay heavy sometimes here on those who had eyes to see and ears to hear the things of the past, and Olive was often pitifully aware of the Moribondi. Rain had streamed down their haggard faces, washing their tears away, the sun had shone upon them, dazzling their tired eyes as they turned the corner where the cobbler had his stall now, and came to the place from whence they might have their first glimpse of the scaffold. Poor frightened souls! But Gemma knew nothing of them, and she would have cared nothing if she had known. She was not imaginative, and her own ills and the present absorbed her, since now she heard the man's step upon the stair.

"You have come then," she cried.

He made no answer, but he put his arms about her, holding her close, and kissed her again and again.

## CHAPTER X [90]

“Filippo! Let me go! Let me breathe, *carissimo*! I want to speak to you.”

He did not seem to hear her. He had drawn the long steel pins out of her hat and had thrown the pretty thing down on the floor, and the loosened coils of shining hair fell over his hands as his strong lips bruised the pale, flower-like curves of her mouth.

Filippo had loved many women in the only way possible to him, and they had been won by his brutality and his insolence, and by the glamour of his name. The annals of mediæval Italy were stained with blood and tears because of the Tor di Rocca, and their loves that ended always in cruelty and horror, and Filippo had all the instincts of his decadent race. In love he was pitiless; no impulses of tenderness or of chivalry restrained him, and his methods were primeval and violent. Probably the Rape of the Sabines was his ideal of courtship, but the subsequent domesticity, the settling down of the Romans with their stolen wives, would have been less to his taste.

“Filippo!” Gemma cried again, and this time he let her go.

“You may breathe for one minute,” he said, looking at his watch. “There is not much time.” [91]

He drew the chair towards the table and sat down. “Come!” he said imperatively, but she shook her head.

“Ah, Filippo, I love you, but you must listen. Did you see my *fidanzato* in our box at the theatre last night?”

“Yes, and I am glad he is so ugly. I shall not be jealous. You must give me your address in Lucca,” he said coolly.

Her face fell. “You will let me marry him? You—you do not mind?”

He made a grimace. “I do not like it, but I cannot help it.”

“But he makes me sick,” she said tremulously. “I hate him to touch me.”

It seemed that her words lit some fire in him. His hot eyes sparkled as he stretched out his arms to her. “Ah, come to me now then.”

She stood still by the table watching him fearfully. “Filippo, I hoped—I thought you would take me away.”

“It is impossible. I cannot even see you again until after Christmas. It will be safer—better not. But in January I will come to Lucca, and then—”

He hesitated, weighing his words, weighing his thought and his desire.

“And then?” she said.

He looked at her closely, deliberately, divining the beauty that was half hidden from him. Her [92]
parted lips were lovely, and the texture of her white skin was satin smooth as the petals of a rose; there was no fault in the pure oval of her face, in the line of her black brows. He could see no flaw in her now, and he believed that she would still seem unsurpassably fair after a lapse of time.

“Then, if you still wish it, I will take you away. You shall have a villa at San Remo—”

“I understand,” she said hurriedly, and she covered her face with her hands.

She had hoped to be the Princess Tor di Rocca, and he had offered to keep her still as his *amica*. Presently, if she wished it and it still suited him, he would set her feet on the way that led to the streets. “Then if you wish it—” To her the insult seemed to lie in the proposed delay. She loved him, and she had no love for virtue. She loved him, and if he had urged her to go with him on the instant she would have yielded easily. But she must await his convenience; next year, perhaps; and meanwhile she must go to Lucca, she must be married to the other man.

She was crying, and tears oozed out between her fingers and dripped on the floor. “He is horrible to me,” she said brokenly.

Filippo rose then and came to her; he loved her in his way, and she moved him as no woman had done yet.

“Why need you marry him? Do not. Wait for me here and I will surely come for you,” he said as he drew her to him.

She hid her face on his shoulder. “I dare not send him away,” she whispered. “All Siena would [93]
laugh at me, and I should be ashamed to be seen. No other man would ever take me after such a scandal. Besides, you know I must be married. You know that, Filippo! And if you did not come—”

“I shall come.”

She clung to him in silence for a while before she spoke again.

“Why not until January?”

“You will be good if I tell you?” he asked when he had kissed her.

“Yes, yes; only hold me.”

“Gemma, you must know that I am poor. I have told you often how the palace in Florence is shabby, eaten up with moth and rust. The Villa at Certaldo is falling into ruins too. I am poor.”

“You have an automobile, servants, horses; you stay here at the best hotel.”

“I should not be poor for a *contadino* but I am for a prince,” he said impatiently and with emphasis. “Believe me, I want money, and I must have it. I cannot steal it or earn it, or win it in the lottery unfortunately, so I must marry it.”

She cowered down as though he had struck her, and made an effort to escape from him, but he held her fast. She tried to speak, but the pain in her throat prevented her from uttering an articulate sound.

“Do not think of the woman,” he said hurriedly. “You need not. I do not. Once I am married I shall [94] go my own way, of course, but her father is in Naples now, and he is a tiresome old fool.”

“*Santissimo Dio!*” she gasped presently. “When—when—”

“In December.”

“Is she beautiful?”

He laughed as he gave the answer she hoped for. “She is an American,” he added, “and it sets one’s teeth on edge to hear her trying to talk Italian. Her accent! She is a small dry thing like a grasshopper.”

“I wish she was dead.”

He set himself to soothe and comfort her, but it was not easy.

“I might as well be ugly,” she cried again and again.

It was the simple expression of her defeat. The beauty she had held to be a shield against sorrow and a key to the garden of delights was but a poor thing after all. It had not availed her, and she had nothing else. She was stripped now, naked, alone and defenceless in a hard world.

“*Carissima*, be still. Have patience. I love you, and I shall come for you,” whispered Tor di Rocca, and she tried to believe him, and to persuade herself that the flame in his brown eyes would burn for her always.

Slowly, as the passion of grief ebbed, the tide of love rose in her and flushed her wan, tear- [95] stained face and made it beautiful. The door of the room was opened, but neither she nor the man heard it, or saw it closed again. It was their last hour, this bare room was their world and they were alone in it.

---

## CHAPTER XI [96]

The table was set for lunch out on the terrace where Astorre lay gazing upon his Tuscany, veiled in a shimmering haze of heat and crowned with August blue. The best coffee cups of majolica ware had been set out, and signora had made a *zabajone* in honour of *Ferragosto*. It was meant to please Olive, who was childishly fond of its thick yellow sweetness, but she seemed restless and depressed; Astorre looked ill, and his mother’s eyes were anxious as they dwelt on him, and so the dainty was eaten in silence, and passed away unhonoured and unsung as though it were humble pie or a funeral baked meat.

Later in the afternoon, when the signora had gone to lie down, Astorre began to ask questions.

“Is your face hot?”

“Yes—no—what makes you think—”

“You are flushed,” he said bluntly, “and you will not meet my eyes. Why? Why?”

“Don’t ask,” she answered. “I cannot tell you.”

The haggard, aquiline face changed and hardened. “Someone has been rude to you, or has frightened you.”

“No.” She moved away to escape the inquisition of his eyes. “Some of these plants want water. I [97] shall fetch some.” She was going in when he called to her.

“Olive,” he said haltingly. “Perhaps we ought to have told you before. My mother heard of some people who want an English governess from a friend of hers who is a music mistress in Florence. They are rich and would pay well, and we should have told you when we heard of it, three days ago, but I could not bear the thought of your leaving Siena while—while I am still here. But if

those people in the Piazza Tolomei are unkind—”

She came back then and sat down beside him. “I do not want to leave Siena,” she said gently.

“Thank you,” he answered, and added: “It will not be for long. Why should I pretend to you?” he went on. “I have suffered, but now I have no pain at all, only I am very weak. Look!”

He held up his hand; it was yellowish white and so thin as to be almost transparent, and it seemed to Olive to be most pathetic because it was not very small or very finely made. It held the broken promise of power, she thought sorrowfully, and she stroked the outstretched palm gently as though it were a half-frozen bird that she would bring to life again.

He closed his eyes, smiling. “Ah, your little fingers are soft and warm.”

“You were at the theatre last night,” he said presently. “Fausto saw you. How do you like your cousin’s *fidanzato*?”

“Not at all.” [98]

“Olive, do you know that they say strange things about the Odalisque? I am afraid there will be trouble if her Lucchese hears—”

“I do not care to hear that nickname,” she said coldly. “It is impertinent and absurd.”

“Oh, do not let go of my hand,” he implored. “Keep on stroking it. I love it! I love it! If I were a cat you would hear me purring. Tell me about England and Shakespeare and Shelley. Anything. I will be good.”

“I—I have not brought the book I promised you. I would have fetched it on my way here, but—but I had not the key. I am sorry, *nino*. Yes, let us talk of nice things.”

She was quick to relent, and soon seemed to be herself again, and he kept his fever-bright eyes on her, watching her as in the old days men may have watched the stars as they waited for the dawn that was to see them pass by the Vicolo dei Moribondi.

Soon, very soon, Signora Aurelia would come out to them, and she would stay beside her son while Olive went to put on her hat, and then they would say “*Addio*” and leave him. And perhaps he would indeed go to God, or to some place where he would see the dear ones no more. The boy’s beautiful lips were shut close, but the grey eyes darkened and dilated painfully.

“Astorre! Are you ill? Do not look so. Oh, I will not go to the Palio. I will stay with you.” [99]

“No, you must go, and to-morrow you can tell me all about it. But will you kiss me now? Do.”

“You need not ask twice, dear Astorre,” she whispered, as she leant over him and touched his forehead with her lips.

“*Ma che!*” he said ungratefully. “That’s nothing. Kiss me properly and at once.”

When the boy’s mother came out on to the terrace a moment later Olive’s blue eyes were full of tears and the rose flush of her cheeks had deepened, but she looked at her friend very kindly as she uttered the word he had been afraid to hear.

“*Addio!*”

The Piazza del Campo was crowded as the Signora Aurelia and Olive passed through it to their seats on the second best stand, and the *carabinieri* were clearing the course. The thousands of people in the central space, who had been chewing melon seeds, fanning themselves, and talking vociferously as they waited, grew quieter, and all began to look one way towards the narrow street from whence the procession should appear.

Olive sat wedged between Signora Aurelia and an old country priest whose shabby soutane was stained with the mud his housekeeper should have brushed off after the last rains, a fortnight before. He had a kind, worn face that smiled when Olive helped him put his cotton umbrella in a [100] safe place between them.

“I shall not need it yet,” he said. “But there is a storm coming. Do you not feel the heaviness of the air, and the heat, *Dio mio*!”

The deep bell of the Mangia tower tolled, and then the signal was given, *un colpo di mortaletto*, and the pageant began.

Slowly they came, the grave, armoured knights riding with their visors up that all might see how well the tanner, Giovanni, and Enrico Lupi of the wine-shop, looked in chain mail; gay, velvet-clad pages carrying the silk-embroidered standards of their *contrade* with all the fine airs of the lads who stand about the bier of Saint Catherine in Ghirlandaio’s fresco in the Duomo; lithe, slender *alfieri* tossing their flags, twisting them about in the carefully-concerted movements that look so easy and are so difficult, until the whole great Piazza was girdled with fluttering light and colour, while it echoed to the thrilling and disquieting beat of the drums. Each *contrada* had its *tamburino*, and each *tamburino* beat upon his drum incessantly until his arms tired and the sweat poured down his face.

Olive’s head began to ache, but she was excited and happy, enjoying the spectacle as a child

enjoys its first pantomime, not thinking but feeling, and steeping her senses in the southern glow and gaiety that was all about her. For the moment her cousin's shame and sorrow, and her friend's pain seemed old, unhappy, far-off things, and she could not realise them here. [101]

The *contrada* of the Oca was the last to go by; it was a favourite with the people because its colours were those of the Italian flag, red, white and green, and the Evvivas broke out as it passed. Olive's page, her cobbler's son, looked gravely up at her as he went by, and she smiled at him and was glad to see that he still wore the magnolia bud she had thrown him in his hood of parti-coloured silk.

Presently they were all seated—the knights and pages with their standard-bearers and esquires—on their own stand in the place of honour before the great central gates of the Palazzo Pubblico.

"Now the horses will run," explained the signora. "Many people like this part best, but I do not. Poor beasts! They are half drunk, and they are often hurt or killed. The *fantini* lash at each other with their hide whips. Once I saw the *Montone* strike the *Lupa* just as they passed here; the crimson flashed out across his face, and in his pain he pulled his horse aside, and it fell heavily against the palings and threw him so that the horse of the *Bruco* coming on behind could not avoid going over him. They said it was terrible to see that livid weal across his mouth as he lay in his coffin."

"He died then?"

"*Ma! Sicuro!*"

Olive looked up at the window where the Menotti should have been, and saw strange faces there. [102] They had not come then. They had not, and Astorre could not. Astorre was very ill ... the times were out of joint. Her cousin's shame and sorrow and her friend's pain seemed to come near again, and to be once more a part of her life, and she saw "gold tarnished, and the grey above the green." When the horses came clattering by, urged by their riders, maddened by the roar of the crowd, she tried to shut her eyes, but she could not. The horse of the *Dragone* stumbled at the turn by San Martino and the rider was thrown, and another fell by the Chigi palace as they came round the second time. Olive covered her face with her hands. The thin, panting flanks, marked with half-healed scars and stained with sweat, the poor broken knees, the strained, suffering eyes ...

"Are you ill, signorina?" the old priest asked kindly.

"No, but the poor horses—I cannot look. Who has won?"

He rose to his feet. "The *Oca*!" he cried excitedly. A great roar of voices acclaimed the favourite's victory, and when the spent horse came to a standstill the *fantino* slipped off its back and was instantly surrounded by men and boys of his *contrada*, dancing and shouting with joy, kissing him on both cheeks, pulling him this way and that, until the *carabinieri* came up and took him away amongst them.

"The *Bruco* hoped to win," the priest said, "and the *Oca's fantino* might get a knife in his back if [103] he were not taken care of."

Already the crowd was dispersing. The victorious *contrada* had been given the painted standard of the Palio, and were bearing it in triumph to the parish church, where it would remain until the next *Ferragosto*. The others were going their separate ways, pages and *alfieri* in silk doublets and parti-coloured hosen arm-in-arm with their friends in black broadcloth, standard-bearers smoking cigarettes, knights unhelmed and wiping heated brows with red cotton handkerchiefs.

"I will go down the Via Ricasoli with you," Olive said.

"It is I who should take you home."

"Oh, I do not mind the crowd, and I know you are anxious to get back to Astorre."

"Astorre—yes. Olive, you don't think he looks more delicate, do you?"

The girl felt that she could not have answered truly if her life had depended on her veracity.

"Oh, no," she said. "He is rather tired, I think. The heat tries him. He will be better later on."

The poor mother seemed relieved.

"You are right; he is always pale in the summer," she said, trying to persuade herself that it was so. "You will come to-morrow to tell him about the Palio?"

"Yes, surely."

There were to be fireworks later on at the Fortezza and illuminations of the Lizza gardens, so the [104] human tide set that way and left the outlying parts of the city altogether. The quiet, tree-shadowed piazzetta before the church of Santa Maria dei Servi was quite deserted. Children played there in the mornings, and old men and women lingered there and sat on the wooden benches in the sun, but they were all away now; the bells had rung for the Ave Maria, the church doors were closed, and the sacristan had gone to his supper.

A little mist had crept up from the valley; steep red roofs and old walls that had glowed in the sun's last rays were shadowed as the light waned, and black clouds came up from the horizon

and blotted out the stars.

“Go home quickly now, Olive. There will be a storm. The poor mad people will howl to-night in the Manicomio. I hear them sometimes when I am lying awake. Good-night, my dear.”

“Good-night.”

---

## CHAPTER XII [105]

Olive was tired, and now that she was alone she knew that she was also a little afraid, so that she lingered on the way and went slowly up the stairs of the house in the Piazza Tolomei. Carmela answered her ring at the bell; her face was swollen and her eyes were red with crying, and the little lamp she carried shook in her hand.

“Oh, Olive,” she said, “Orazio says he will not marry her. He has heard such things about her from his friends, and even in the Café Greco…. It is a scandal.”

She put her lamp down on the floor, and took out her handkerchief to wipe away the tears that were running down her cheeks.

Olive came in and shut the door after her.

“Where is he?”

“They are all in the dining-room. Aunt sent Carolina out for the evening, and it is a good thing, because of course in the kitchen she could hear everything. He sent a message to say he could not go to the Palio, and Gemma’s head ached when she came back from church, so we all stayed in. He came half an hour ago—”

“What does Gemma say?”

“Nothing. She looks like a stone.”

“I must go through the dining-room to get to my room,” Olive said uncertainly. “What shall I do? [106] Pass through very quickly or wait here in the passage?”

“Better go in,” advised Carmela. “They may not even notice you. He keeps on talking so loudly, and aunt and Maria are crying.”

“Poor things! I am so sorry!”

The two girls clung together for a moment, and Olive’s eyes filled with tears as she kissed her cousin’s poor trembling lips. Then Carmela stooped to pick up her lamp and put it out, and they went on together down the passage.

The lamp was lit on the table that Carolina had laid for supper before she went out, and the Menotti sat in their accustomed places as though they were at a meal. Orazio Lucis was walking to and fro and gesticulating. His boots creaked, and the noise they made grated on the women’s nerves as he talked loudly and incessantly, and they listened. Maria kept her face hidden in her hands, but Gemma held herself erect as ever, and she did not move when the two girls came in, though her sombre eyes were full of shame.

“What shall I say to my friends in Lucca?” raved Orazio. “What shall I say to my mother? Even if I still consented to marry you she would not permit it; she would refuse to live in the same house with such a person—and she would be right. *Mamma mia!* She is always right. She said, ‘The girl is beautiful, but she has no money, and I tell you to think twice.’ I have been trapped here by all [107] you women. You all knew.”

He pointed an accusing finger at Signora Carosi. She sobbed helplessly, bitterly, as she tried to answer him, and Olive, who had waited in the shadow by the door, hoping that he would move on and enable her to pass into her own room, came forward and stood beside her aunt. She had thought she would feel abashed before this man who had been wronged, but he had made her angry instead, and now she would not have left the room if he had asked her, or have told him the truth if he had begged for it.

“Many girls have been offered me,” he went on excitedly, “but I would not hear of them because you were beautiful, and I thought you would make a good wife. There was Annina Giannini; she had five thousand lire, and more to come, and now she is married to a doctor in Lucca. I gave her up for you, and you are dust of the streets.”

Gemma flinched then as though he had struck her. The insult was flagrant, and it was time to make an end. She rose from her chair slowly, as though she were very tired, and filled her glass from the decanter on the table with a hand that trembled so that half the wine was spilled.

“Orazio,” she said, and her dark eyes sought his and held them so that he was compelled to stand still looking at her. “Orazio, I hope you and your ugly fool of a mother will die slowly of a horrible [108] disease, and be tormented in hell for ever. May your flesh be covered with sores while your bones rot and are gnawed by worms. *Cosi sia!*”

She crossed herself devoutly, and then drank some of the wine and flung the glass over her shoulder. It fell to the floor and crashed to splinters.

The man's jaw dropped and his mouth fell open, but he had no words to answer her. She made a curious movement with her hands as though she would cleanse them of some impurity, and then turned and went quickly into her own room. They all heard the bolts drawn and the key turned in the lock.

Olive was the first to speak, and her voice sounded strange and unnatural to herself.

"She has said her say and left us, Signor Lucis. Will you not go too? You will not marry her. *Benissimo!* We wish you good-evening."

"You are very easy, signorina *mia*," he answered resentfully; "but I cannot forgive."

"Who asked your forgiveness?" she retorted. "It is you who should beg our pardon—you, who are so ready to believe the tales that are told in the *cafés* and to come here to abuse helpless women. You are a coward, signore. Oh, how I hate men ... Judges in Israel ... I would have them stoned first. *What's that?*"

There was shouting in the street, and then a loud knocking on the house door. The women looked [109]
at each other with frightened eyes.

"What is it?"

Carmela ran to Gemma's door and shook the handle, calling to her to come out. There was no answer, and perhaps they had a dreadful premonition of the truth even then; Olive left them huddled together like frightened sheep. The knocking still continued, and it sounded very loud when she came out of the flat on to the stairs. She was beside herself; that is, she was aware of two Olives, one who spoke in a strange voice and trembled, and was now going down into the darkness, stumbling at nearly every step and moaning incoherent prayers to God, and one who watched and listened and was surprised at what was said and done.

When she opened the great house door a man stood aside to let her come out. She looked at him and knew him to be one of the neighbours, and she wondered why he had run out into the street in his shirt-sleeves. He was pale, too, and looked ill, and he seemed to want to speak to her, but she could not listen.

A crowd had collected about something that was lying on the pavement near their house wall; Olive looked up and saw Gemma's window opened wide, and then she knew what it was. The people made way for her and let her come to where the dead thing lay on its back with the knees [110]
drawn up. Some woman had already covered the face with a handkerchief, and dark blood was oozing out from under it. Olive crouched down beside its pitiful disarray.

"Will someone help me carry her into the house?" she said.

No one answered her, and after a while she spoke again.

"Will someone fetch a doctor quickly?"

"It is useless, *figlia mia*; she is dead."

"At least"—her voice broke, and she had to begin again, making a painful effort to control the words that she might be quite intelligible—"at least help me to carry her in from the street. Is there no Christian here?"

Two *carabinieri* came running up now, and they made the people stand back so that a space of pavement was left clear; the younger man spoke to Olive.

"We cannot move the body until the authorities come, signorina. It must stay where it is, but we shall guard it and keep the people off, and you can fetch a sheet from the house to cover it."

"Oh, God!" she said, "when will they come?"

He slightly shrugged his shoulders.

"I do not know. We have sent to tell them. In a few minutes, perhaps, or in two hours, three hours."

"And we must leave her here?"

"Yes, signorina." [111]

"I will get the sheet."

He helped her to rise from her knees. Looking down she saw a stain of blood on her skirt, and she clung to his arm for a moment, swaying as though she would fall. There was a murmur among the people of pity and sympathy. "*Poveretta! Che disgrazia!*"

"*Coraggio!*" the *carabiniere* said gently.

Up again, up all the dark stairs, wondering if the others knew and were afraid to come down, wondering if there had been much pain, wondering if it was not all a dreadful dream from which she must wake presently. They knew.

The younger girl met her cousin at the door; Maria had fainted, and *la zia* was hysterical; as to Orazio, he was sitting on the sofa crying, with his mean, mouse-coloured head buried in the cushions.

“I looked out of your bedroom window as I could not get into her room,” whispered Carmela. “Oh, Olive, what shall we do?”

“I am going to take down a sheet as they will not let us bring her in. You can come with me, and we will stay beside her and say prayers.”

“Yes, yes. Oh, Olive, that is a good idea.”

The two came out into the street together and spread the white linen covering carefully over the stark body before they knelt, one on each side. Of the thousands who had filled the Piazzale at sunset hundreds came now to see them mourning the broken thing that lay between. Olive was [112] aware of many faces, of the murmuring of a great crowd, and shame was added to the horror that held her fast. She folded her hands and tried to keep her eyes fixed upon them. Then she began to pray aloud.

“*Pater noster, qui es in coelis, sanctificetur nomen tuum—*”

The clear voice was tremulous at first, but it gathered strength as it went on, and Carmela said the words too. The men in the crowd uncovered, and the women crossed themselves.

Rain was falling now, slowly at first and in heavy drops that splashed upon the stones, and there was a threatening sound—a rumbling of thunder—away in the south.

Olive knew no more prayers in Latin, but her cousin began the Miserere.

“*Miserere mei, Deus, secundum magnam misericordiam tuam, et secundum multitudinem miserationum tuarum, dele iniquitatem meam.*”

Among the many who had come to look their last upon the Odalisque were men who had made free with her poor name, had been unsparing in their utterance of the truth concerning her and ready to drag her down, and some of these moved away now shamefacedly, but more stayed, and one after another took up the words.

“*Amplius lava me ab iniquitate mea: et a peccato meo munda me.*”

Gemma herself had trodden out the fire that consumed her, but who could dare say of the grey [113] cold ashes, “These are altogether vile.”

“*Tibi soli peccavi, et malum coram te feci: ut justificeris in sermonibus tuis et vincas cum judicaris.*”

She had sinned, and she had been punished; she had suffered fear and shame.

“*Asperges me hyssopo et mundabor, lavabis me, et super nivem dealbabor.*”

There had been some taint in her blood, some flaw in her will.

“*Cor mundum crea in me, Deus, et spiritum rectum innova in visceribus meis.*”

A dark-eyed slender boy, wearing the green and white and scarlet of his *contrade*, pushed his way to the front presently. It was Romeo, and he carried a great bunch of magnolia blossoms.

“Oh, signorina,” he said, half crying, “the *alfieri* and I wanted to give you these because you brought us good luck so that we won the Palio. I little thought—”

He stopped short, hesitating, and afraid to come nearer. He thought she looked like one of the stone angels that kneel on the sculptured tombs in the Campo Santo; her face seemed rough hewn in the harsh white glare of the electric light, so deep were the shadows under her eyes and the lines of pain about the praying lips. His heart ached with pity for her.

“Give them to me,” she said, and he was allowed to come into the space that the *carabiniere* kept clear.

He thrust the bunch hurriedly into her hands, faltering, “*Dio vi benedica*.” [114]

“*Andatevi con Dio*,” she replied, and then laid the pale flowers and the shimmering green crown of leaves down upon the still breast. “Gemma, if ever I hurt you, forgive me now!”

It was raining heavily, and as the sheet grew damp it clung more closely to the body of the girl who lay there with arms outstretched and knees drawn up as though she were nailed to a cross.

The boy still lingered. “You will be drenched. Go into the house,” he urged. Then, seeing he could not move her, he took off his velvet embroidered cloak and put it about her shoulders. A woman in the crowd came forward with a shawl for Carmela.

So the hours passed.

---

# BOOK II.—FLORENCE

## CHAPTER I

October can be cold enough sometimes in the Val d'Arno when the snow falls on the Apennines, and the woods of Vallombrosa are sere, and Florence, the flower city, lies then at the mercy of the winds. Mamie Whittaker, who, in her own phrase, "hated to be blown about anyhow," had not been out all day. She lolled in an armchair before a crackling fire of olive wood in the room that she "lit with herself when alone," though scarcely in the Tennysonian sense. Hers was a vivid personality, and older women who disliked her called her flamboyant, and referred to an evident touch of the tar-brush that would make her socially impossible in America though it passed unnoticed in Italy. Her age was seventeen, and she dressed after Carmen to please herself, and read Gyp with the same intention. She was absorbed now in *Les Amoureux*, and had to be told twice that her cousin had come before she would look up.

"Miss Marvel? Show her in."

She rose and went forward to greet her relative, whom she had not seen for some years, and the two met at the door and kissed each other with enthusiasm. [116]

"Edna! My! Well, you have not grown anyway. What a tiny thing! Come and sit down right here." She rang for tea while her visitor slowly and rather shyly divested herself of her sables and laid them on a side table. Edna Marvel was the elder of the two by three years, but she was so small that she seemed a mere child. Her sallow little face resembled that of a tired monkey, yet it had an elfin charm, and her hands were beautiful as carved toys of ivory made in the East for a king's son to play with. They might hold a man's heart perhaps, but Mamie did not notice them, her own allurements being of more obvious description.

She thought Edna was real homely, and her spirits rose accordingly. "Where are you staying?"

"At the Bristol. Poppa guessed we would take a villa later on if we felt like it."

Mamie rang again. "Bring some more cakes, and tell Miss Agar to come and pour out the tea."

"Who is Miss Agar?"

"My companion, a sort of governess person. She takes me out walks, and sits by when my music-master comes, and so forth. She is new, and she won't do, but I may as well make her useful while she stays."

"Why won't she do?" [117]

"Oh, she just won't. Momma don't like her much, and I'm not singing her praises."

Edna looked curiously at the slender girl in the black dress who came in and took her place at the table.

She said "Good afternoon" in her pleasant little voice.

The governess person seemed rather surprised that she should address her.

"Good afternoon," she replied. "Do you take milk and sugar?"

"Bring them round for us to help ourselves," dictated Mamie.

Olive only smiled as she repeated her question, but Edna was distressed at her cousin's rudeness, and her sensitive face was quite pink as she hurriedly declined sugar. She came to the table to fetch her cup, but Miss Whittaker waited for hers to be brought to her.

"How do you like this room, Edna? I had it fixed up for myself, and everything in it is mine." She looked complacently up at the hangings of primrose silk that hid the fifteenth century frescoes on the walls.

Her cousin hesitated. "I guess it must have cost some."

"Yes. The Marchese does not like it. He is so set on his worm-eaten old tapestries and carved chairs, and he wanted momma to refurnish the palace to match, but not she! Louis Quinze, she said, and Louis Quinze it is, more or less. I tell the Marchese that if he is so fond of the musty Middle Ages he ought to go about in armour himself by rights. But the old sinner is not really a bit romantic." [118]

It occurred to Olive that the right kind of governess would utter a word in season. "It is not usual for young girls to refer to their stepfathers as you do," she said drily.

"Wait until you know mine better," Mamie answered unabashed. "Last night he said your complexion was miraculous. Next thing he'll try if it comes off. Are you coming to dinner to-night,

Edna?”

“Yes, auntie asked us. The—the Prince will be here, won’t he?”

Mamie looked down her nose. “Oh, yes,” she said carelessly. “Your beau will come. People generally do when we ask them. The food is all right, and we have real good music afterwards sometimes. You know Avenel stays in Florence whiles because his brother has a Villa at Settignano. Well, momma guessed she would get him to play here for nothing once. Of course she was willing to pay any money for him really, but she just thought she would try it on. She asked him to dinner with a lot of other people, and made him take her in, though there were two Neapolitan dukes among the guests. The food was first-rate; she had told the cook to do his best, and she really thought the *entrée* would have made Vitellius sit up. It was perfect. Well, [119] afterwards she asked Avenel to play, and he just smiled and said he could not. Why, she said, he gave a recital the day before for nothing, for a charity, and played the people’s souls out of their bodies, made them act crazy, as he always does. Couldn’t he play for friendship? No, he said, he couldn’t just then because one must be filled with sorrow oneself before one can make others feel, and he inferred that he had no room even for regret. ‘I play Chopin on a biscuit,’ he said.”

“He must be rather a pig,” was Edna’s comment.

“Not a bit of it. Momma said he really had not eaten much; in fact she had noticed that he left a bit of that lovely *entrée*. Perhaps he is afraid of getting fat. Momma was real mad with him.”

Olive’s cheeks were flushed and her hands trembled as she arranged the cups on the tray. She was thankful for the shelter afforded by the great silver tea-pot. Mamie’s back was turned to her, but Edna seemed desirous of including her in the conversation.

“Have you heard Avenel, Miss Agar?” she asked presently in her gentle, drawling way.

“No. Is he very famous? I have never heard of him as a pianist.”

“Oh, his professional name is Meryon, of course. He is billed as that and known all the world [120] over, though he only began to play in public three years ago when his wife left him. She was always a horrid woman, and she made him marry her when he was quite a boy, they say. They say he plays to forget things as other men take to drink. He has been twice to New York, and I know a girl who says he gave her a lock of his hair, but I don’t believe her. It is dark brown, almost black, but I guess she cut it off a switch. He’s not that kind.”

Olive said nothing.

“You need not stay if you don’t want to,” Mamie said unceremoniously. “Be ready to come down after dinner. I might want you to play my accompaniments.”

“I can’t think why you say she won’t do,” cried Edna when she was gone out of the room. “I call her perfectly sweet. Rather sad-looking, but just lovely.”

Mamie sniffed. “Glad you admire her,” she said.

The governess was expected to appear at luncheon, but dinner was served to her in her own room, where she must sit in solitary state, dressed in her best and waiting for a summons, until eleven o’clock, when she might assume that she would not be wanted and go to bed. This evening Olive lingered rather anxiously over her dressing, trying to make the best of herself, since it seemed that she was really to come down to-night into the yellow drawing-room where she spent [121] so many weary hours of a morning listening to Mamie scraping her Strad while the German who was supposed to teach her possessed his soul in patience. She put on her black silk dress. It was a guinea robe bought at a sale in Oxford Street the year before, a reach-me-down garment for women to sneer at and men to describe vaguely as something dark, and she hated the poor thing.

Most women believe that the men who like them in cotton frocks would adore them in cloth of gold, and are convinced that the secret of Cleopatra’s charm lay in her extensive wardrobe.

Avenel. It had shocked Olive to hear his name uttered by alien lips, as it hurt her to suppose that he came often to the Palazzo Lorenzoni. She would not suppose it, and, indeed, nothing that Mamie had said could lead her to think that he was a friend of the family. They had clutched at him greedily, and he had repaid with an impertinence. That was all.

The third footman, whose duty it was to attend upon her, brought two covered dishes on a tray at eight o’clock, and soon after nine he came again to fetch her.

There was a superabundance of gorgeous lackeys in the corridors that had been dusty and deserted five years before, and a gigantic *Suisse* stood always on guard now outside the palace gates. The Marchesa would have liked to have had outriders in her scarlet livery when she went [122] out driving in the streets of Florence, but her husband warned her that some mad anarchist might take her for the Queen, and so she contented herself with a red racing motor. The millions old Whittaker had made availed to keep his widow and the man who had given her a title in almost regal state. They entertained largely, and the Via Tornabuoni was often blocked with the carriages and motors that brought their guests. Olive, sitting alone in her chilly bedroom, mending her stockings or trying to read, heard voices and laughter as the doors opened—harsh Florentine and high English voices, and the shrill sounds of American mirth—night after night. But the Lorenzoni dined *en famille* sometimes, as even marquises and millionaires may do, and there were but two shirt-fronts and comparatively few diamonds in the great golden shining room

when she entered it.

The Marchesa, handsome, hard-featured, gorgeous in grey and silver, did not choose to notice her daughter's governess; she was deep in talk with her brother-in-law; but men could not help looking at Olive. Mr Marvel stood up and bowed as she passed, and the silent, saturnine Marchese stared. His black eyes were intent upon her as she came to the piano where Mamie was restlessly turning over the music, and no one watching him could fail to see that he was [123] making comparisons that were probably to the disadvantage of his step-daughter.

Fast men are not necessarily fond of the patchouli atmosphere in their own homes, and somehow Mamie seemed to reek of that scent, though in fact she never used it. She was clever and fairly well educated, and she had always been sheltered and cared for, but she was born to the scarlet, and everything she said and did, her way of walking, the use she made already of her black eyes, proclaimed it. To-night, though she wore the red she loved—a wonderful, flaring frock of chiffon frills and flounces—she looked ill, and her dark face was sullen.

"The beastly wind has given me a stiff neck," she complained. "Here, I want to have this."

She chose a coon's lullaby out of the pile of songs, and Olive sat down obediently and began the accompaniment. It was a pretty little ditty of the usual moony order, and Mamie sang it well enough. Mr Marvel looked up when it was over to say, "Thank you, my dear. Very nice."

"It is a silly thing," Mamie answered ungraciously. "I'll sing you a *canzonetta* now."

She turned over the music, scattering marches and sonatas, and throwing some of them on the floor in her impatience. Olive, wondering at her temper, presently divined the cause of it. The [124] folding doors that led into the library were half closed. No lamps, but a flicker of firelight and the hush of lowered voices, Edna's pleasant little pipe and a man's brief, murmured answers, and there were short spaces of silence too. The American girl and her prince were there.

The Marchese had raised his eyebrows at the first words of the *canzonetta*, and at the end of the second verse he was smiling broadly.

"Little devil!" he said.

No one heard him. His wife was showing her brother-in-law some of her most treasured bits of china. She was quite calm, as though her knowledge of Italian was fair the Neapolitan dialect was beyond her. Mr Marvel, of course, knew not a syllable of any language but his own, and the slang of Southern gutters was as Greek to Olive. Their placidity amused the Marchese, and so did the thought of the little scene that he knew was being enacted in the library.

"Shall we join the others now, Edna, *carissima*?"

"If—if you like."

He nearly laughed aloud as he saw the silk curtains drawn. The Prince stood aside to allow Edna to pass in first, and Olive, glancing up momentarily from the unfamiliar notes, saw the green gleam of an emerald on the strong brown hand as the brocaded folds were lifted up. Her own [125] hands swerved, blundered, and she perpetrated a hopeless discord.

"I beg your pardon," she said confusedly.

Mamie shrugged her shoulders. "Never mind," she answered lightly. "The last verse don't matter anyway. Come to here, Edna. Momma wants to hear your fiddle-playing."

"Yes, play us something, my dear."

The little girl came forward shyly.

As the Prince and the Marchese stood together by the fireplace at the other end of the long room Mamie joined them. "You sang that devil's nocturne inimitably," observed her stepfather, drily. "I am quite sorry to have to ask you not to do it again."

"Not again? Why not?"

She perched herself on the arm of one of the great gilt chairs. The Prince raised his eyes from the thoughtful contemplation of her ankles to stare at her impudent red parted lips.

"Why not! Need I explain, *cara*? It was delicious; I enjoyed it, but, alas!" He heaved an exaggerated sigh and then laughed, and the young man and the girl shared in his merriment.

"I am sorry to make so many mistakes," Olive said apologetically as she laboured away at her part of an easy piece arranged for violin and piano.

"Oh, it is nothing. I have made ever so many myself, and I ought to have turned the page for [126] you."

The gentle voice was rather tremulous.

"That was charming," pronounced the Marchesa. "Now that sonata, Edna. I am so fond of it."

"Very well, auntie."

The Prince had gone into the billiard-room with his host, and Mamie was with them. They were

knocking the balls about and laughing ... laughing.

---

## CHAPTER II [127]

In the Cascine gardens the lush green grass of the glades was strewn with leaves; soon the branches would be bare, or veiled only in winter mists, and the Arno, swollen with rain, ran yellow as Tiber. It was not a day for music, but the sun shone, and many idle Florentines drove, or rode, or walked by the Lung'Arno to the Rajah's monument, passing and repassing the bench where Olive sat with Madame de Sarivière's stout and elderly German Fräulein. Mamie was not far away; flamboyant as ever in her frock of crimson serge, her black curls tied with ribbon and streaming in the wind, she was the loud centre of a group of girls who played some running game to an accompaniment of shrill cries and little screams of laughter.

"Do you like young girls?" Olive asked the question impulsively, after a long silence.

"I am fond of my pupils; they are good little things, rather foolish, but amiable. But I understand your feeling, my poor Miss Agar. Your charge is—"

Olive hesitated. "It is a difficult age; and she has the body of twenty and the sense of ten. I am putting it very badly, but—but I was hateful years ago too. I think one always is, perhaps. I [128] remember at school there were self-righteous little girls; they were narrow and intolerant, easily shocked, and rather bad-tempered. The others were absurdly vain, sentimental, sly. All that comes away afterwards if one is going to be nice."

"They are female but not yet womanly. The newly-awakened instincts clamour at first for a hearing; later they learn to wait in silence, to efface themselves, to die, even," answered the Fräulein, gravely.

A victoria passed, then some youths on bicycles, shouting to each other and ringing their bells. They were riding all together, but they scattered to let Prince Tor di Rocca go by. He was driving tandem, and his horses were very fresh. Edna was with him, her small wan face rather set in its halo of ashen blonde hair and pale against the rich brown of her sables.

When they came by the second time Mamie called to her cousin. The Prince drew rein, and the groom sprang down and ran to the leader's head.

"My, Edna, how cold you look! It's three days since I saw you, but I guess Don Filippo has been doing the honours. Have you seen all the old galleries and things? Momma said she noticed you and uncle in a box at the Pergola last night."

She stood by the wheel, and as she looked up, not at Edna but at the Prince, he glanced smilingly [129] down at her and then away again.

"We are going back to the hotel now," Edna said. "Will you come and have tea, Mamie? Is that Miss Agar over there? Ask her if you may, and if she will come too."

"I don't need to ask her," the girl answered, but she went back nevertheless and spoke to Olive.

"Can the groom take the cart home, Filippo? We will walk back with them."

"Yes, Bellina is in spirits, but she will not run away from Giovanni," he said, trying not to seem surprised that she should curtail their drive.

They crossed the wide gravelled space outside the gardens and walked towards the town by the Lung'Arno. Already the cypresses of San Miniato showed black against the sky, and the reflected flame of sunset was dying out in the windows of the old houses at the river's edge. All the people were going one way now, and leaving the tree-shadowed dusk for the brightly-lit streets, Via Tornabuoni, all palaces and antiquity shops, and Piazza Vittorio Emanuele, where the band would play presently.

The two American girls walked together with Don Filippo and Olive followed them. Edna held herself very erect, but Mamie seemed almost to lean backwards. She swayed her hips as she [130] went and swung her short skirts, and there was affectation and a feverish self-consciousness in her every movement. Olive could not help smiling to herself, but she remembered that at school she had been afflicted with the idea that a pout—the delicious *moue* of fiction—became her, and so she was inclined to leniency. Only seventeen.

The Prince wore riding gloves, and so the green gleam of his emerald was hidden from her. If only she could be sure that she had seen him before. What then? Nothing—if she could think that he would always be kind to gentle little Edna.

Just before they reached the hotel Miss Marvel joined her, leaving her cousin to go on with Don Filippo, and began to talk to her.

"The river is just perfect at this hour. Our sitting-room has a balcony and I sat there last night watching the moon rise over San Miniato. I guess it looked just that way when Dante wrote his sonnets. Beatrice must have been real mad with him sometimes, don't you think so? She must have been longing to say, 'Come on, and don't keep talking.' But she was a nice high-minded girl,

and so she never did. She simply died."

"If she died for him she must have been a fool," Olive said shortly. Her eyes were fixed on the Prince's broad back. He was laughing at some sally of Mamie's. [131]

Edna was shocked. "Don't you just worship Dante?"

"Yes, yes," answered the elder girl. "He was a dear, but even he was not worth that. At least, I don't know. He was a dear; but I was thinking of a girl I knew ... perhaps I may tell you about her some day."

"Yes, do," Edna said perfunctorily. She was trying to hear what her cousin was saying to Filippo, and wishing she could amuse him as well. They passed through the wide hall of the hotel and went up in the lift. The Marvels' private sitting-room was on the second floor. They were much too rich to condescend to the palms and bamboo tables and wicker chairs of the common herd, and tea was served to Edna and her guests in a green and white boudoir that was, as the Marchesa might have said, more or less Louis Seize.

Mr Marvel came in presently, refusing tea, but asking leave to smoke, and the Prince, gracefully deferential to his future father-in-law, listened to the little he had to say, answering carefully in his perfect English.

"Yes, sir. There is a great deal of poverty here. On my Tuscan estates too. Alas! yes."

Mamie sat near him, and in the flickering red light of the fire she looked almost pretty. Filippo's eyes strayed towards her now and then. Edna came presently to where Olive rested apart on the wide cushioned window-seat. "Will you have some more tea?" [132]

"No, thank you. I think we must be going soon. The Marchesa will not like it if we stay out too long."

Edna hesitated. "I wanted to ask you a silly question. Had you ever seen the Prince before last week?"

There was the slightest perceptible pause before Olive answered, "No, never. Why do you ask?"

"I thought you looked as if you had somehow that night at the Lorenzoni palace. When we came in you were at the piano, and I thought you looked queer—as if—"

"Oh, no," Olive said again, but she wondered afterwards if she had done right.

On their way home Mamie drew her attention to a poster, and she saw the name of Meryon in great orange letters on a white ground.

"He will be here before Christmas. I'll let you come with me to hear him play if you are good," she said, and she took the elder girl's hand in hers and pinched it. "I could race you home down this side street, but I suppose I must not."

She was gay and good-humoured now, and altogether at her best, and Olive tried hard to like her, but she could not help seeing that the triumph that overflowed in easy, shallow kindness was an unworthy one. [133]

---

## CHAPTER III [134]

Olive sat alone at the end of one of the tiers of the stone amphitheatre built into the hill that rises, ilex clad, to the heights of San Giorgio. Some other women were there, mothers with young children, nurses and governesses dowdily dressed as she was in dark-coloured stuffs, but she knew none of them.

Mamie seldom cared to come to the old Boboli gardens. Its green mildewed terraces and crumbling deities of fountain and ilex grove had no charm for her, and as a rule she and her friends preferred the crowded Lung'Arno and Cascine on the days when there was music, but this Thursday she had suggested that they should come across the river.

"Daisy Vereker has promised to meet me, and as she is only here a week on her way to school in Paris I should hate to disappoint her."

The two girls were lingering now about the grass arena, talking volubly, whispering, giggling. Miss Vereker's maid, a yellow-haired Swiss, sat not far off with her knitting, and every now and then she called harshly to her charge to know the time.

Olive sat very still, her hands clasped, her eyes fixed on the far horizon. She loved the old-world silence that was only broken by the dripping of water in the pools. No birds sang here, no leaves fell at the waning of the year. The seasons had little power over stained marble and moss, cypress, and ilex and olive, and as spring brought no riot of green and rose and gold in flower, so autumn took nothing away. Surely there were ghosts in the shadowed avenues, flitting in and out among the trees, joining hands to dance "*la ronde*" about the pool of Neptune. Gay abbés, cavaliers, beautiful ladies of the late Renaissance, red-heeled, painted, powdered; frail, degenerate children of the hard-headed old Florentine citizens pictured in the frescoes of Giotto [135]

and Masaccio. No greater shades could come to Boboli.

Florence was half hidden by the great yellow bulk of the Pitti palace, but Olive could see the slender, exquisite white and rose tower of Giotto, and the mellowed red of the cathedral's dome against the faint purple of the hills beyond Fiesole, and she looked at them in preference to the contorted river gods and exuberant nymphs of the fountain in the royal courtyard close by.

After a while she opened her book and began to read. Presently she shivered; her jacket was thin, and the air grew chilly as the afternoon waned, but her reading absorbed her and she was [136] surprised, when at last she raised her eyes, to see that the Pitti palace was already dark against the sky. Nurses and children were making their way out, and soon those who lingered would hear stentorian shouts from the gardeners, "*Ora si chiude!*" and they too would leave by one or other of the gates.

Olive climbed down into the arena. Mamie was nowhere in sight, and Daisy Vereker and her maid were gone too. Olive, thinking that perhaps they might have gone up to the fountain of Neptune, began to climb the hill. She asked an old man who was coming down from there if he had seen two young ladies, one dressed in red.

"No, signorina."

She hurried back to the arena and spoke to a woman there. "Have you seen a young lady in red with black curls?"

She answered readily: "*Sicuro!* She went towards the Porta Romana half an hour ago. I think the other signorina was leaving and she wished to accompany her a part of the way. There was an older person with them."

Olive's relief was only momentary; it sounded well, but one might walk to the Porta Romana and back twice in the time. Soon the gates would be closed, and if she had not found Mamie then, and the gardeners made her leave with the others, what should she do? She suspected a trick. The [137] girl had a mischievous and impish humour that delighted in the infliction of small hurts, and she might have gone home, happy in the thought that her governess would get a "wigging," or she might be hiding about somewhere to give her a fright.

Olive went up the steep path towards the Belvedere, hoping to find her there. That part of the garden was not much frequented, and the white bodies and uplifted arms of the marble gods gleamed ghostly and forlorn in the dusk of the ilex woods that lay between the amphitheatre and the gate.

She went on until she saw a glimmer of red through the close-woven branches. Mamie was there in the dark wood, and she was not alone. A man was with her, and he was holding her easily, as if he knew she would not go yet, and laughing as she stood on tiptoe to reach the fine cruel lips that touched hers presently, when he chose that they should.

Olive turned and ran up the path to the top of the hill, and there she stood for a while, trying to get her breath, trying to be calm, and sane and tolerant, to see no harm where perhaps there was none after all. And yet the treachery and the deceit were so flagrant that surely no condonation was possible. She felt sick of men and women, and of life itself, since the greatest thing in it [138] seemed to be this hateful, miscalled love that preceded sorrow and shame and death. Was love always loathsome to look upon? Not in pictures or on the stage, where it was represented as a kind of minuet in which the man makes graceful advances to a woman who smiles as she draws away, but in real life—

"Not real love," she said to herself. "Oh, God, help me to go on believing in that."

Raising her eyes she saw the evening star sparkling in a wide, soft, clear space of sky. It seemed infinitely pure and remote, and yet somehow good and kind, as it had to Dante when he climbed up out of hell.

"*Quindi uscimmo a riveder le stelle.*"

"*Ora si chiude!*" bawled a gardener from the Belvedere.

Mamie came hurrying up the path towards the hill. "Oh, are you there?" she said in some confusion. "I went some of the way to the other gate with Daisy."

"I was beginning to be afraid you were lost, so I came along hoping to meet you," answered Olive.

She said nothing to the girl of what she had seen. It would have been useless; nothing could alter or abash her inherent unmorality. But after dinner she wrote a note to Edna and went out herself to post it.

The answer came at noon on the following day. Miss Marvel would be at home and alone between [139] three and four and would be pleased to see Miss Agar then; meanwhile she remained very sincerely her friend.

---

## CHAPTER IV [140]

“Why do you tell me this now?” asked Edna. “The other day when I asked you if you had known him before you said you had not.”

“Something that has happened since then determined me.”

Edna’s room was full of flowers, roses, narcissi and violets, and the air was heavy with their scent. Filippo had never failed in his *petits soins*. It was so easy to give an order at the florist’s, and the bill would come in presently, after the wedding, and be paid in American dollars. There were boxes of sweets too; and a volume of Romola, bound in white and gold, lay on the table. Edna had been looking at the inscription on the fly-leaf when Olive came in. “*Carissima*” he had written, and she had believed him, but that was half an hour ago. Now her small body was shaken with sobs, her face was stained with tears because that faith she had had was dying.

The chill at her heart made her feel altogether cold, and she edged her chair nearer to the fire, and put her feet up on the fender.

“I wish I could feel it was not true, but somehow though I have been so fond of him I have not trusted him. Well, your cousin was beautiful, and perhaps he had known her a long time before [141] he knew me. He wanted to say good-bye kindly. He was entangled—such things happen, I know. He could not help what happened afterwards. That was not his fault.”

Olive could not meet her pleading eyes. “I thought something like that last week,” she said. “And that is why I kept silence; but now I know he would make you unhappy always. Oh, forgive me for hurting you so.” She came and knelt down beside the little girl, and put her arms about her. “Don’t cry, my dear. Don’t cry.”

“Oh, Olive, I was so fond of him! Now tell me what has happened since.”

“Put your hands in mine. There, I will rub the poor tiny things and warm them. They are so pretty. Yesterday, in the Boboli gardens, I missed your cousin, and when I went to look for her I saw her with the Prince. He held her and was kissing her.”

“Oh!” Edna sprang to her feet. “That settles it. Mamie is common and real homely, and if he can run after her I have done with him. I could have forgiven the other, especially as she is dead, but Mamie! Gracious! Here he is!”

He came into the room leisurely, smiling, very sure of his welcome. Olive met the hot insolence of his stare steadily, and Edna turned her back on him.

“Olive,” she said, “you speak to him. Tell him—ask him—” Her gentle voice broke. [142]

“What is the matter?” he asked carefully.

“I saw you twice in Siena last summer. Do you remember *Rigoletto* at the Lizza theatre? You were in the stage box. You wore evening dress, and I saw that emerald ring you have now on your finger. The next day you met my Cousin Gemma in my room in the Vicolo dei Moribondi. Do you remember the steep dark stairs and the white walls of the bare place where you saw her last?”

He made no answer, and there was still a smile on his lips, but his eyes were hard. Edna was looking at him now, but he seemed to have forgotten her.

“I suppose you loved her,” Olive said slowly. “Do you remember the faint pink curve of her mouth, the little cleft in her chin, and her hair that was so soft and fine? There were always little stray curls on the white nape of her neck. I came to my room that morning to fetch a book. When I had climbed the stairs I found that I had not the key with me, but the door was unlocked and I saw her there with a man, and I saw the green gleam of an emerald.”

Men have such a power of silence. No woman but would have made some answer now, denying with a show of surprise, making excuses, using words in one way or another.

“They were talking about you in the town, though I think they did not know who you were—at [143] least I never heard your name—and that night Gemma’s *fidanzato* told her he would not marry her. You know best what that meant to her. She rushed into her own room and threw herself out of the window. Ah, you should have seen the dark blood oozing through the fine soft curls! She lay dead in the street for hours before they took her away.”

“*Santissimo Dio!* Is this true?”

“Yes.”

“Gemma—I never knew it—” His face was greatly altered now, and he had to moisten his lips before he could speak.

“I could have forgiven that,” Edna said tremulously after a while. “But not yesterday. Your kisses are too cheap, Filippo.”

“Oh,” he said hoarsely. “So Gemma’s cousin saw that too. It was nothing, meant nothing. Edna, if you can pardon the other, surely—”

“It was nothing; and it proved that Mamie is nothing, and that you are nothing—to me. That is the end of the matter.”

He winced now at the contempt underlying her quiet words, and when she took off her ring and laid it on the table between them he picked it up and flung it into the fire.

“I do not take things back,” he said savagely.

When he had left the room Edna began to cry again. “I believe he is suffering now, but not for me. Would he care if I killed myself? I guess not. I am not pretty, only my hands, and hands don’t count.” [144]

Olive tried to comfort her.

“Poppa shall take me away right now. I have had enough of Europe, and so I shall tell him when he comes in. Must you go now? Well, good-bye, my dear, and thank you. You are white all through, and I am glad you have acted as you have, though it hurts now. If ever I marry it shall be an American ... but I was real fond of Filippo.”

---

## CHAPTER V [145]

Cardinal Jacopo of Portugal was buried in a side chapel of the church of San Miniato al Monte, and his counterfeit presentment, wrought in stone, lies on the tomb Rossellino made for him. Rossellino, who loved to carve garlands of acanthus and small sweet *amorini*, has conferred immortality on some of the men whose tombs he adorned in *basso-rilièvo*, and they are remembered because of him; but the cardinal has another claim. He is beautiful in himself as he rests there, his young face set in the peace that passes all understanding, his thin hands folded on his breast.

Mourners were kneeling in the central aisles of the church, and women carrying wreaths passed through it on their way to the Campo Santo beyond, for this was the day of All Souls, and there were fresh flowers on the new graves, and little black lamps were lit on those that were grass grown and decked only with the bead blossoms that are kept in glass cases and need not be changed once a year. The afternoon was passing, but still Olive lingered by the cardinal’s monument. Looking at him understandingly she saw that there had been lines of pain about the [146] firm mouth. He had suffered in his short life, he had suffered until death came to comfort him and give him quiet sleep. The mother-sense in her yearned over him, lying there straight and still, with closed eyes that had never seen love; and, womanlike, she pitied the accomplished loneliness that yet seemed to her the most beautiful thing in the world. The old familiar words were in her mind as she looked down upon this saint uncanonised: “Cleanse the thoughts of my heart by the inspiration of thy Holy Spirit!” and she remembered Astorre, for whose sake she had come to this church to pray. Once when she had been describing a haggard St Francis in the Sienese gallery to him, he had said: “Ah, women always pity him and admire his picturesque asceticism, but if married men look worried they do not notice it. Their troubles are no compliment to your sex.”

Poor Astorre had not been devout in any sense, but he had written his friend a long letter on the day after Gemma’s suicide, and he had asked for her prayers then. “Fausto told me how you knelt there in the street beside the dead Odalisque and said the Pater-noster and the Miserere. Perhaps you will do as much for me one day. Your prayers should help the soul that is freed now from the burden of the flesh. I cannot complain of flesh myself, but my bones weigh and I shall be [147] glad to be rid of them. Come and see me soon, *carissima* ...”

The next morning his mother sent for the girl, but when she came into the darkened room where he lay he had already passed away.

“He asked for you, but he would not see a priest. You know they refused to bury his father because he fought for united Italy. Ah! Rome never forgets.”

After the funeral Signora Aurelia had sold her furniture and gone away, and she was living now with a widowed sister in Rome. The Menotti had left Siena too and had gone to Milan, and Olive, not caring to stay on alone in the place where everyone knew what had happened, had come to the Lorenzoni in Florence. She had had a letter from Carmela that morning.

“We like Milan as the streets are so gay, and the shops are beautiful. We should have got much better mourning here at Bocconi’s if we could have waited, but of course that was impossible. Our apartment is convenient, but small and rather dark. Maria hopes you are fatter. She is going to send you some *panforte* and a box of sugared fruits at Christmas. *La Zia* has begun to crochet another counterpane; that will be the eighth, and we have only three beds. *Pazienza!* It amuses her.”

Though Olive was not happy at the Palazzo Lorenzoni, she could not wish that she had stayed [148] with her cousins. She felt that their little life would have stifled her. Thinking of them, she saw them, happier than before, since poor Gemma had not been easy to live with, and quite satisfied to do the same things every day, waddling out of a morning to early mass and the marketing, eating and sleeping during the noon hours, and in the evenings going to hear the music *in piazza*.

Olive was not happy. She was one of those women whose health depends upon their spirits, and of late she had felt her loneliness to be almost unbearable. Her youth had cried for all, or

nothing. She would have her love winged and crowned; he should come to her before all the world. Never would she set her foot in secret gardens, or let joy come to her by hidden ways, but now she faced the future and saw that it was grey, and she was afraid.

It seemed to her that she was destined to live always in the Social Limbo, suspended between heaven and earth, an alien in the drawing-room and not received in the kitchen. One might as well be *déclassée* at once, she thought, and yet she knew that that must be hell.

If Avenel came to Florence and sought her out would she be weak as Gemma had been, light as Mamie was? Olive knelt for a while on the stones, and her lips moved, though her prayer was inarticulate.

Sunset was burning across the Val d'Arno, and the river flowed as a stream of pure gold under [149]
the dark of the historic bridges. Already lights sparkled in the windows of the old houses over the Ponte Vecchio, and the bells of all the churches were ringing the Ave Maria as she passed through the whining crowd of beggars at the gate of the Campo Santo and went slowly down the hill. The blessed hour of peace and silence was over now, and she must trudge back through the clamorous streets to be with Mamie, to meet the Marchese's horribly observant eyes, and to be everlastingly quiet and complacent and useful. She was paid for that.

She was going up to her room when the lodge porter ran up the stairs after her with a letter. "For you, signorina."

It was from Edna.

> "Dear Olive"—she had written,—"I could not wait for trains so papa has hired a car, and we shall motor straight to Genoa and catch the boat there. I want to go home to America pretty badly.—Your loving friend,
>
> "Edna.
>
> "*P.S.*—I am still right down glad you told me.—E. M."

One of the servants came to Olive's room presently.

"La Signora Marchesa wishes to see you at once in her boudoir." [150]

The Marchesa had come straight from the motor to her own room, her head was still swathed in a white veil, and she had not even taken off her heavy sable coat. She had switched on the light on her entrance, and now she was searching in the drawers of her bureau for her cheque-book.

"Ah, well, gold perhaps," she said after a while, impatiently, as she snapped open the chain purse that hung from her wrist. "Is that you, Miss Agar?"

Olive, seeing her counting out her money, like the queen in the nursery rhyme, had stopped short near the door. She paled a little as she understood this must be the sequel to what she had done, but she held her head high, and there was a light of defiance in the blue eyes.

"I have to speak to you very seriously."

The Marchesa, a large woman, was slow and deliberate in all her movements. She took her place on a brocaded settee with the air of a statue of Juno choosing a pedestal, and began to draw off her gloves. "I greatly regret that this should be necessary." She seemed prepared to clean Augean stables, and there was something judicial in her aspect too, but she did not look at Olive.
"You know that I took you into my house on the recommendation of the music-teacher, Signora [151]
Giannini. It was foolish, I see that now. It has come to my knowledge that you had no right to enter here, no right to be with my daughter." She paused. "You must understand perfectly what I mean," she said impressively.

"No, I do not understand," the girl said. "Will you explain, Marchesa?"

"Can you deny that you were involved in a most discreditable affair in Siena before you came here? That your intrigue—I hate to have to enter into the unsavoury details, Miss Agar, but you have forced me to it—that your intrigue with your cousin's *fiancé* drove her to suicide, and that you were obliged to leave the place in consequence?"

"It is not true."

"Ah, but your cousin killed herself?"

"Yes."

"Her lover was in the house at the time, and you were there too?"

"Yes."

"You were at the theatre the night before and everyone noticed that he paid you great attention?"

"He? Oh," cried Olive, "how horrible, and how clever!"

The hard grey eyes met hers for a moment.

The girl's pale face was flushed now with shame and anger. "So clever! Will you congratulate the Prince for me, Marchesa?" she said very distinctly.

"You are impertinent. Of course, I cannot keep you. My daughter—" [152]

The Marchesa saw her mistake as she made it and would have passed on, but Olive was too quick for her. She smiled. "Your daughter! I do not think I can have harmed her."

"You can take your money; I have left it there for you on the bureau. Please pack your boxes and be off as soon as possible."

"I am to leave to-night? It is dark already, and I have no friends in Florence."

The Marchesa shrugged her shoulders. "I can't help that," she said.

Olive went slowly out into the hall, and stood there hesitating at the head of the stairs. She scarcely knew what to do or where to turn, but she was determined not to stay longer than she could help under this roof. She went down to the porter's lodge in the paved middle court.

"Gigia!"

The old woman came hobbling out to greet her with a toothless smile. "Ah, *bella signorina*, there are no more letters for you to-night. Have you come to talk to me for a little?"

"I am going away," the girl answered hurriedly. "Will your husband come in to fetch my luggage soon? At eight o'clock?"

Gigia laid a skinny hand on Olive's arm, and her sharp old eyes blinked anxiously as she said, [153] "Where are you going, *nina mia*?"

"I don't know."

"Not to the Prince?"

"Good heavens! No!"

"Ah, the *padrona* is hard—and you are pretty. I thought it might be that, perhaps. Don Filippo is like his old wolf of a father, and young lambs should beware of him."

"Can you tell me of some quiet, decent rooms where I can go to night?"

"*Sicuro!* My husband's brother keeps the Aquila Verde, and you can go there. Giovanni will give you his best room if he hears that you come from us, and he will not charge too much. I am sorry you are going, *cara*."

Olive squeezed her hand. "Thank you, Gigia. You are the only one I am sorry to say good-bye to. I shall not forget you."

The Marchese was coming down the stairs as Olive went up again. He smiled at her as he stood aside to let her pass. "You are late, are you not? I shall not tell tales but I hope for your sake that my wife won't see you."

"She won't see me again. I am going," she answered.

He would have detained her. "One moment," he said eagerly, but she was not listening. "I shall miss you."

After all she heard him. "Thank you," she said gravely. [154]

A door was closed on the landing below, and the master of the house glanced at it apprehensively. He was not sure—

---

## CHAPTER VI [155]

The Aquila Verde was the oldest of the tall houses in the narrow Vicolo dei Donati; the lower windows were barred with iron worn by the rains of four hundred years, and there were carved marble pillars on either side of the door. The façade had been frescoed once, and some flakes of colour, red, green and yellow, still adhered to the wall close under the deep protecting eaves.

"It was a palace of the Donati once," the host explained to Olive as he set a plate of steaming macaroni swamped in tomato sauce before her.

"I thought it might have been a convent, because of the long paved corridors and this great room that is like a refectory."

"No, the Donati lived here. Dante's wife, Gemma, perhaps. Who knows!"

Ser Giovanni took up a glass and polished it vigorously with the napkin he carried always over his arm before he filled it with red Chianti. He had never had a foreigner in his house before, but he had heard many tales about them from the waiters in the great Anglo-American hotels on the Lung'Arno, and he knew that they craved for warmth and an unlimited supply of hot water and [156]

tea. Naturally he was afraid of them, and he was also shy of stray women, but Olive was pretty, and he was a man, and moreover a Florentine, and his brother had come with her and had been earnest in his recommendations, so he was anxious to please her. “There is no *dolce* to-night,” he said apologetically. “But perhaps you will take an orange.”

When Olive went up to her room presently she found a great copper jar of hot water set beside the tiny washstand. The barred window was high in the thickness of the stone wall and the uncarpeted floor was of brick. The place was bare and cold as a cell, but the bed, narrow and white as that of Mary Mother in Rossetti’s picture, invited her, and she slept well. She was awakened at eight o’clock by a young waiter who brought in her coffee and rolls on a tray. She was a little startled by his unceremonious entrance, but it seemed to be so much a matter of course that she could not resent it. He took the copper jar away with him. “The *padrone* says you will want some more water,” he said smilingly.

“Yes. But—but if you bring it back you can leave it outside the door.”

The coffee was not good, but it was hot, and the rolls were crisp and delicious, and Olive ate and drank happily and with an excellent appetite. No more listening to mangled scales and murdered nocturnes and sonatas, no more interminable meals at which she must sit silent and yet avoid [157] “glumness,” no more walking at Mamie’s heels.

She was free!

Presently she said to herself, more soberly, that nevertheless she must work somehow to gain her livelihood. Yes, she must find work soon. The Aquila Verde would shelter and feed her for six lire a day. Her last month’s salary of eighty lire had been paid her four days ago, and she had already spent more than half of it on things she needed, new boots, an umbrella, gloves, odds and ends. This month’s money had been given her last night, and she had left a few lire for the servant who had always brought up her dinner to her room, and had made Gigia a little present. The cabman had bullied her into giving him two lire. She had about one hundred remaining to her. Sixes into one hundred.... Working it out carefully on the back of an old envelope she found that she might live on her means for sixteen days, and then go out into the streets with four lire in her pocket—no, three, since she could scarcely leave without giving a *mancia* to the young man whom she now heard whistling “Lucia” in the corridor.

“The hot water, signorina.”

“A thousand thanks.”

Surely in a few days she would find work. It occurred to her that she might advertise. “Young English lady would give lessons. Terms moderate. Apply O. A., Aquila Verde.” She wrote it out [158] presently, and took it herself to the office of one of the local papers.

“I have saved fifteen centesimi,” she thought as she walked rather wearily back by the long Via Cavour.

Three days passed and she was the poorer by eighteen lire. On Sunday she spent the morning at the Belle Arti Gallery. Haggard saints peered out at her from dark corners. Flora smiled wistfully through her tears; she saw the three strong archangels leading boy Tobias home across the hills, and Angelico’s monks and nuns meeting the Blessed Ones in the green, daisied fields of Paradise, and for a little while she was able to forget that no one seemed to want English lessons.

On Monday she decided that she must leave the Aquila Verde if she could find anyone to take her for four, or even three lire a day. She went to Cook’s office in the Via Tornabuoni; it was crowded with Americans come for their mails, and she had to wait ten minutes before one of the young men behind the counter could attend to her.

“What can I do for you?”

“Can you recommend me to a very cheap *pension*?”

She noticed a faint alteration in his manner, as though he had lost interest in what she was saying, but when he had looked at her again he answered pleasantly, “There is Vinella’s in the [159] Piazza Indipendenza, six francs, and there is another in the Via dei Bardi, I think; but I will ask. Excuse me.”

He went to speak to another clerk at the cashier’s desk. They both stared across at her, and she fancied she heard the words, pretty, cheap enough, poor.

“There is a place in the Via Decima kept by a Frau Heylmann. I think it might suit you, and I will write the address down. It is really not bad and I can recommend it as I am staying there myself,” he added ingenuously. He seemed really anxious to help now, and Olive thanked him.

As she went out she met Prince Tor di Rocca coming in. Their eyes met momentarily and he bowed. It seemed strange to her afterwards when she thought of it, but she fancied he would have spoken if she had given him an opportunity. Did he want to explain, to tell more lies? She had thought him too strong to care what women thought of him once they had served him and been cast aside. True, she was not precisely one of these.

The Via Decima proved to be one of the wide new streets near the Porta San Gallo. No. 38 was a pretentious house, a tenement building trying to look like a palace, and it was plastered over with

dingy yellow stucco. Olive went through the hall into a courtyard hung with drying linen, and climbed up an outside iron staircase to the fifth floor. There was a brass plate on the Frau's door, [160] and Canova's Graces in terra cotta smirked in niches on either side. The large pale woman who answered the bell wore a grey flannel dressing-gown that was almost buttonless, and her light hair was screwed into an absurdly small knot on the nape of her neck.

"You want to be taken *en pension*? Come in."

She led the way into a bare and chilly dining-room; the long table was covered with black American cloth that reminded Olive of beetles, but everything was excessively clean. There was a framed photograph of the Kaiser on the sideboard. In a room beyond someone was playing the violin.

"How many are you in family?"

"I am alone."

The Frau looked down at the gloved hands. "You are not married?"

"No."

The woman hesitated. "You would be out during the day?"

"Oh, yes," Olive said hopefully. "I shall be giving lessons."

"Ah, well, perhaps— What would you pay?"

"I am poor, and I thought you would say as little as possible. I should be glad to help you in the house."

"There is a good deal of mending," the Frau said thoughtfully; "and you might clean your own [161] room. Shall we say twenty-four lire weekly?"

The playing in the other room ceased, and a young man put his head in at the door. "*Mutter*," he said, and then begged her pardon, but he did not go away.

Olive tried not to look at him, but he was staring at her and his eyes were extraordinarily blue. He was pale, and his wide brows and strong cleft chin reminded her of Botticelli's steel-clad archangel. He wore his smooth fair hair rather long too, in the archangelic manner, he—

"Paid in advance," Frau Heylmann said very sharply. Then she turned upon her son. "What do you want, Wilhelm?"

"Oh, I can wait," he said easily.

She snorted. "I am sorry I cannot receive you," she said to the girl. "I am not accustomed to have young women in my house. No."

She waddled to the door and Olive followed her meekly, but she could not keep her lips from smiling. "I do not blame you," she said as she passed out on to the landing. "Your son is charming."

The woman looked at her more kindly now that she was going. "He is beautiful," she said, with pride. "Some day he will be great. *Ach!* You should hear him play!"

Olive laughed. "You would not let me."

She could not take this rebuff seriously, but as she trudged the streets in the thin cold rain that [162] had fallen persistently all that morning her sense of humour was blunted by discomfort. The long dark, stone-paved hall that was the restaurant of the Aquila Verde seemed cold and cheerless. At noon it was always full of hungry men devouring macaroni and *vitello alla Milanese*, and the steam of hot food and the sound of masticating jaws greeted Olive as she came in and took her place at a little table near the stove.

The young waiter, Angelo, brought her a cup of coffee after the cheese and celery. "It gives courage," he said. "And I see you need that to-day, signorina."

---

## CHAPTER VII [163]

Olive saw the *padrone* of the Aquila Verde that night before she went to her room and told him she was leaving.

His face fell. "Signorina! I am sorry! I told Angelo to bring hot water every time, always, when you rang. Have you not been well served?"

She reassured him on that point and went on to explain that she was going to live alone. "I have made arrangements," she added vaguely. "A man will come with a truck to take my box away to-morrow morning."

And the *padrone* was too much a man of his world to ask any more questions.

There had been no rooms vacant in the *pension* in Piazza Indipendenza. The manservant who answered the door had recommended an Italian lady who took paying guests, and Olive had gone to see her, but her rooms were small, dark and dingy, and they smelt overpoweringly of sandal wood and rancid oil. The shabbily-smart *padrona* had been voluble and even affectionate. “I am so fond of the English,” she said. “My husband is much occupied and I am often lonely, but we shall be able to go out together and amuse ourselves, you and I. I had been hoping to get an [164] invitation to go to the *Trecento* ball at the Palazzo Vecchio, but Luigi cannot manage it. Never mind! We will go to all the *Veglioni*. I love dancing.” She looked complacently down at her stubby little feet in their down-at-heel beaded slippers.

Olive had been glad to get away when she heard the impossible terms, but the afternoon was passing, and when she got to the house in the Via dei Bardi she saw bills of sale plastered on its walls and a litter of straw and torn paper in the courtyard. The porter came out of his lodge to tell her that one of the daughters had died.

“They all went away, and the furniture was sold yesterday.”

As Olive had never really wished to live and eat with strangers she was not greatly depressed by these experiences, but she was cold and tired, and her head ached, and when on her way back to the Aquila Verde she saw a card, “*Affitasi, una camera, senza mobilia*,” in the doorway of one of the old houses in the Borgo San Jacopo, she went in and up the long flight of steep stone stairs without any definite idea of what she wanted beyond a roof to shelter her.

A shrivelled, snuffy old woman showed her the room. It was very large and lofty, and it had two great arched windows that looked out upon the huddled roofs of Oltr’Arno. The brick floor was [165] worn and weather-stained, as were the white-washed walls.

“It was a *loggia*, but some of the arches have been filled in and the others glazed. Ten lire a month, signorina. As to water, there is a good fountain in the courtyard.”

Olive moved in next day.

Heaven helps those who help themselves, she thought, as she borrowed a broom from her landlady to sweep the floor. The morning was fine and she opened the windows wide and let the sun and air in. At noon she went down into the Borgo and bought fried *polenta* for five soldi and a slice of chestnut cake at the cook shop, and filled her kettle with clear cold water from the fountain in the courtyard.

Later, as she waited for the water to boil over her little spirit lamp, she made a list of absolute necessaries. She had paid a month’s rent in advance, and fifty-three lire remained to her. Fifty-three lire out of which she must buy a straw mattress, a camp-stool, two blankets, some crockery and soap.

She went out presently to do her shopping and came back at dusk. She was young enough to rather enjoy the novelty of her proceedings, and she slept well that night on the floor, pillowless, and wrapped in her coarse brown coverings; and though the moon shone in upon her through the unshuttered windows for a while she did not dream or wake until the dawn.

Olive tried very hard to get work in the days that followed, and she went twice to the registry [166] office in the Piazza Vittorio Emanuele.

“Ah, you were here before.” A stout woman came bustling out from the room behind the shop to speak to her the second time. “There is nothing for you, *signorina mia*. The ladies who come here will not take anyone without a character, and a written reference from Milan or Rome is no good. I told you so before. Last winter Contessa Foscoli had an English maid with a written character—not from us, I am glad to say—and she ran away with the chauffeur after a fortnight, and took a diamond ring and the Contessa’s pearls with her. If you cannot tell me who you were with last I shall not be able to help you.”

“The Marchesa Lorenzoni,” Olive said.

The woman drew in her breath with a hissing noise, then she smiled, not pleasantly. “Why did you not say so before? I have heard of you, of course. The little English girl! Well, I can’t help you, my dear. This is a registry office.”

Olive walked out of the shop at once, but she heard the woman calling to someone in the room at the back to come and look at her, and she felt her cheeks burning as she crossed the road. “The little English girl!” What were they saying about her?

One morning she went into one of the English tea-rooms. It was kept by two elderly maiden [167] ladies, and one of them came forward to ask her what she wanted. The Pagoda was deserted at that hour, a barren wilderness of little bamboo tables and chairs, tea-less and cake-less. The walls were distempered green and sparsely decorated with Japanese paper fans, and Olive noticed them and the pattern of the carpet and remembered them afterwards as one remembers the frieze, the engravings, the stale periodicals in a dentist’s waiting-room.

“Do—do you want a waitress?”

The older woman’s face changed. Oh, that change! The girl knew it so well now that she saw it ten times a day.

“No. My sister and I manage very well, and we have an Italian maid to do the washing up.”

“Thank you,” Olive said, faltering. “You don’t know anyone who wants an English girl? I have been very well educated. At least—”

“I am afraid not.”

Poor Olive. She was an unskilled workwoman, not especially gifted in any way or fitted by her upbringing to earn her daily bread. Long years of her girlhood had been spent at a select school, and in the result she knew a part of the Book of Kings by heart, with the Mercy speech from the *Merchant of Venice* and the date of the Norman Conquest. Every day she bought the *Fieramosca*, and she tried to see the other local papers when they came out. Several people advertised who [168] wanted to exchange lessons, but no one seemed inclined to pay. Once she saw names she knew in the social column.

> “The Marchese Lorenzoni is going to Monte Carlo, and he will join the Marchesa and Miss Whittaker in Cairo later in the season.”
>
> “Prince Tor di Rocca is going to Egypt for Christmas.”

It was easy to read between the lines.

---

## CHAPTER VIII [169]

Florence, in the great days of the Renaissance, bore many men whom now she delights to honour, and Ugo Manelli was one of these. He helped to build a bridge over the Arno, he had his palace in the Corso frescoed by Masaccio, he framed sumptuary laws, and he wrote sonnets, charming sonnets that are still read by the people who care for such things. The fifth centenary of his birthday, on the twenty-eighth of November, was to be kept with great rejoicings therefore. There were to be fireworks and illuminations of the streets for the people, and a *Trecento* costume ball at the Palazzo Vecchio for those who had influence to procure tickets and money to pay for them.

Mamie, greatly daring, proclaimed her intention of wearing the “*umile ed onesto sanguigno*” of Beatrice.

“You will be my Dante, Don Filippo? Momma is going in cloth of gold as Giovanna degli Albizzi.”

The Marchese looked inquiringly at the Prince. “Shall you add to the gaiety of nations, or at least of Florence?”

The young man shrugged his broad shoulders. “I suppose so.” He was well established as *cavalier servente* [170] now in the Lorenzoni household, and it was understood that Mamie would be a princess some day. The girl was so young that the engagement could scarcely be announced yet.

“I guess we must wait until you are eighteen, Mamie,” her mother said. “Keep him amused and don’t be exacting or he’ll quit. He is still sore from his jilting.”

“I can manage him,” the girl boasted, but she had no real influence over him now. The forbidden fruit had allured him, but since it was his for the gathering it seemed sour—as indeed it was, and he was not the man to allow himself to be tied to the apron-strings of a child. When he was in a good humour he watched his future wife amusedly as she metaphorically and sometimes literally danced before him, but he discouraged the excess of audacity that had attracted him formerly, perhaps because he scarcely relished the idea of a Princess Tor di Rocca singing, “*O che la gioia mi fè morir*.”

Probably he regretted gentle, amenable Edna. At times he was grimly, impenetrably silent, and often he said things that would have wounded a tender heart past healing. Fortunately there were none such in the Palazzo Lorenzoni.

“I shall be ridiculous as the Alighieri, and you must forgive me, Mamie, if I say that one scarcely [171] sees in you a reincarnation of Monna Beatrice.”

“Red is my colour,” the girl answered rather defiantly.

The Marchese laughed gratingly.

Filippo dined with the Lorenzoni on the night of the ball. He wore the red *lucco*, but had declined to crown himself with laurel. His gaudy Muse, however, had no such scruples, and her black curls were wreathed with silver leaves. The Prince was not the only guest; there was a slender, flaxen-haired girl from New York dressed after Botticelli’s Judith, an artillery captain as Lorenzo dei Medici, and another man, a Roman, in the grey of the order of San Francesco.

“Poppa left for Monte this morning,” Mamie explained over the soup. “He reckoned dressing up was just foolishness, but the fact is armour is hot and heavy, and he would have had to pass from

trousers into greaves. He has not got the right kind of legs for parti-coloured hosen, someway."

The Piazza della Signoria was crowded as it had been on that dreadful May day when Girolamo's broken body was burnt to ashes there; as it was on the afternoon of the Pazzi conspiracy, when a bishop was hanged from one of the windows of the old Palazzo. But the old order had changed, giving place to new even here, and the people had come now merely to see the fine dresses; there was no thought of murder, though there might be some picking of pockets. The night was [172] still and cold, and the white, round moon that had risen above the roof of the Loggia dei Lanzi shone, unclouded, upon the restless human sea that divided here and there to let the carriages and motors pass. The guests entered by the side door nearest the Uffizi, and *carabinieri* kept the way clear. The crowd was dense thereabouts, and the people pushed and jostled one another, leaned forward, and stood on tiptoe to see the brocaded ladies in their jewelled coifs and the men, hooded and strange, in their gay mediæval garb.

The Marchesa's cloth of gold drew the prolonged "Oh!" of admiration that is only accorded to the better kind of fireworks, and hearing it, she smiled, well satisfied. Mamie followed with Filippo. Her dress of rose-coloured brocade was exquisite. It clung to her and seemed to be her one and only garment; one could almost see the throb of her heart through the thin stuff. She let her furred cloak fall as she got out of the car and then drew it up again about her bare arms and shoulders.

"Who is the black-curled scarlet thing?"

"Beatrice."

"What! half naked! She is more like one of the *donnine* in the *Decameron*."

Her Dante, overhearing, hurried her up the steps. His eyes were bright with anger in the shadow [173] of his hood, but they changed and darkened as he caught sight of one girl's face in the crowd. At the foot of the grand staircase he turned, muttering some excuse and leaving Mamie and her mother to go up alone, and hurried back and out into the street. He stood aside as though to allow some newcomers to pass in. The girl he had come to see was close to him, but she was half hidden behind a *carabiniere's* broad epauletted shoulders.

"*Scusi*," murmured the Prince as he leant across the man to pull at her sleeve. "I must see you," he said urgently. "When? Where?"

"When you like," she answered, but her eyes were startled as they met his. "No. 27 Borgo San Jacopo. The only door on the sixth landing."

"Very well. To-night, then, and in an hour's time."

The press of incoming masqueraders screened them. The *carabiniere* knew the Prince by sight, and he listened with all his might, but they spoke English, and he dared not turn to stare at the girl until the tall figure in the red *lucco* had passed up the steps and gone in again, and by that time she had slipped away out of sight.

Filippo came to the Borgo a little before midnight and crossed the dingy threshold of No. 27 as [174] the bells of the churches rang out the hour. The old street was quiet enough now but for the wailing of some strayed and starving cats that crept about the shadowed courts and under the crumbling archways, and the departing cab woke strange echoes as it rattled away over the cobble stones.

The only door on the sixth landing was open.

"What are you doing here?" Filippo said, wonderingly, as he groped his way in. The room was in utter darkness but for one ray of moonlight athwart it and the faint light of the stars, by which he saw Olive leaning against the sill of one of the unshuttered windows, and looking, as it seemed, towards him.

"Come in," she said. "You need not be afraid of falling over the furniture. There is not much."

"You seem partial to bare attics."

"Ah! you are thinking of my room in the Vicolo dei Moribondi."

"Yes!" he said as he came towards her from the door. "I cannot rest, I cannot forget. For God's sake tell me about the end! I have been to Siena since I heard, but I dared not ask too many questions. Was she—did she suffer very much before she died? Answer me quickly."

"Throw back your hood," she said. "Let me see your face."

Impatiently he thrust the folds of white and scarlet away and stood bare-headed. She saw that his [175] strong lips quivered and that his eyes were contracted with pain.

"No, she died instantly. They said at the inquest that it must have been so."

"Her face—was she—" his voice broke.

"I did not see it. It was covered by a handkerchief," she said gently. "Don't! Don't! I did not think you would suffer so much."

"I suffer horribly day and night. Love is the scourge of the world in the hands of the devil. That is

certain. She is buried near the south wall of the Campo Santo. Oh, God! when I think of her sweet flesh decaying—”

Olive, scarcely knowing what she did, caught at his hand and held it tightly.

“Hush, oh, hush!” she said tremulously. She felt as though she were seeing him racked. “I do believe that her soul was borne into heaven, God’s heaven, on the day she died. She was forgiven.”

“Heaven!” he cried. “Where is heaven? I am not guilty of her death. She was a fool to die, and I shall not soon forgive her for leaving me so. If she came back I would punish her, torment her, make her scream with pain—if she came back—oh, Gemma!—*carissima*—”

The hard, hot eyes filled with tears. He tried to drag his hand away, but the girl held it fast.

“You are kind and good,” he said presently in a changed voice. “I am sorry if I did you any harm [176]
with the Lorenzoni, but the woman told me she meant to send you away in any case because of the Marchese.”

Then, as he felt the clasp of her fingers loosening about his wrist, “Don’t let go,” he said quickly. “Is he really going to take you to Monte Carlo with him?”

“Does his wife say so? Do you believe it?”

He answered deliberately. “No, not now. But you cannot go on living like this.”

“No.”

He was right. She could not go on. Her little store of coppers was dwindling fast, so fast that the beggars at the church doors would soon be richer than she was. And she was tired of her straits, tired of coarse food and a bare lodging, and of the harsh, clamorous life of the streets. The yoke of poverty was very heavy.

Filippo drew a little nearer to her. “I could make you love me.”

“Never.”

He made no answer in words but he caught her to him. She lay for a moment close in his arms, her heart beating on his, before she cried to him to let her go.

He released her instantly. “Well?”

“I must light the lamp,” she said unsteadily. She was afraid now to be alone with him in the dim, [177]
starlit room, and she fumbled for the matches. He stood still by the window waiting until the little yellow flame of the *lucerna* burnt brightly on the floor between them, then he smiled at her, well pleased at her pallor. “You see it would be easy,” he said.

She answered nothing.

“I am going to Naples to-morrow by the afternoon train. Will you come with me? We will go where you like from there, to Capri, or to Sicily; and you will help me to forget, and I will teach you to live.”

There was silence between them for a while. Olive stared with fascinated eyes at this tall, lithe man whose red *lucco*, falling in straight folds to his feet, became him well. The upper part of his face was in shadow, and she saw only the strong lines of the cleft chin, and the beautiful cruel lips that smiled at her as though they knew what her answer must be.

She was of those who are apt to prefer one hour of troubled joy to the long, grey, eventless years of the women who are said to be happy because they have no history, and it seemed to her that the moment had come when she must make a choice. This love was not what she had dreamed of, longed for; other lips, kinder and more true, should have set their seal on her accomplished womanhood. She knew that this that was offered was a perilous and sharp-edged thing, a bright sheath that held a sword for her heart, and yet that heart sang exultantly as it fluttered like a [178]
wild bird against the bars of its cage. It sang of youth and life and joy that cares not for the morrow.

It sang.

Filippo watched her closely and he saw that she was yielding. Her lips parted, and instinctively as he came towards her she closed her eyes so nearly that he saw only a narrow line of blue gleaming between her lashes. But as he laid his hands upon her shoulders something awoke within her, a terror that screamed in her ears.

“I am afraid,” she said brokenly. “Leave me and come back to-morrow morning if you will. I cannot answer you now.”

As he still held her she spoke again. “If I come to you willingly I shall be more worth having, and if you do not go now I will never come. I will drown myself in the Arno.”

“Very well. I will come to-morrow.”

When he was gone she went stumblingly across the room to the mattress on the floor in the farthest corner, and threw herself down upon it, dressed as she was.

There was no more oil in the little lamp, and its flame flickered and went out after a while, leaving her in the dark. The clocks were striking two. Long since the moon had set behind the hills and now the stars were fading, or so it seemed. There was no light anywhere.

Olive did not sleep. Her frightened thoughts ran to and fro busily, aimlessly, like ants disturbed, [179] hither and thither, this way and that. He could give her so much. Nothing real, indeed, but many bright counterfeits. For a while she would seem to be cared for and beloved. Yes, but if the true love came she would be shamed. She knew that her faith in Dante's Amor, his lord of terrible aspect, made his coming possible. The men and women who go about proclaiming that there is no such person because they have never seen him were born blind. Like those prosy souls who call the poets mad, they mistake impotence for common sense.

Besides, the first step always costs so dear, and now that he was gone and she could think of him calmly she knew that she was afraid of Filippo Tor di Rocca. He was cruel. Then among the forces arrayed against him there was the desire of that she called her soul to mortify her flesh, to beckon, to lead by stony ways to the heights of sacrifice. She could not be sure where that first step would lead her, she could not be sure of herself or gauge the depths to which she might fall.

"Oh, God!" she said aloud. "Help me! Don't let things be too difficult."

The hours of darkness were long, but the grey glimmering dawn came at last with a pattering of rain against the uncurtained window. Olive rose as soon as it was light, and before eight she had [180] eaten the crust of bread she had saved for her breakfast and was gone out. On her way down the stairs she met her landlady and spoke to her.

"If anyone comes to see me will you tell them that I have gone out, and that I do not know when I shall come in again. And if anything is said about my going away you can say that I have changed my mind and that I shall not leave Florence."

She would not cross the river for fear of meeting Filippo in any of the more-frequented streets on the other side, so she went down the Via della Porta Romana and out by the gates into the open country beyond. She walked for a long time along muddy roads between the high walls of vineyards and olive orchards. She had an umbrella, but her skirts were draggled and splashed with mire and the water came through the worn soles of her thin shoes. She had nothing to eat and no money to buy food. There were some coppers in her purse, but she had forgotten to bring that. It was windy, and as she was toiling up the steep hill to Bellosguardo her umbrella blew inside out. She threw it down by the side of the road and went on, rather glad to be rid of it and to feel the rain on her face. She had two hands now to hold her skirt and that was better. Soon after noon she knocked at the door of a gardener's cottage and asked for something to eat; she [181] was given a yellow lump of *polenta* and a handful of roast chestnuts and she sat down on a low wall by the roadside to devour them. She did not think much about anything now, she could not even feel that she cared what happened to her, but she adhered to the resolution she had made to keep out of the way until Tor di Rocca had left Florence. She could not sit long. It was cold and she was poorly clad, so poorly that the woman in the cottage had believed her to be a beggar. The Prince would have had to buy her clothes before he could take her away with him.

She wandered about until nightfall and then made her way back to the house in the Borgo, footsore and cold and wretched, but still the captain of her soul; ragged, but free and in no man's livery.

The landlady heard her coming slowly up the stairs and came out of her room to speak to her.

"A gentleman called for you this morning. I told him you were gone out and that you had changed your mind about leaving Florence, and at first he seemed angry, and then he laughed. 'Tell her we shall meet again,' he said. Then another came this afternoon in an automobile and asked if you lived here, and when I said you were out he said he would come again this evening. He left his card."

Olive looked at it with dazed eyes. Her pale face flushed, but as she went on up the stairs the [182] colour ebbed away until even her lips were white. She had to rest twice before she could reach her own landing, and when she had entered her room she could go no farther than the door. She fell, and it was some time before she could get up again, but she still held the card crumpled in her hand.

"Jean Avenel."

---

## CHAPTER IX [183]

The Villa Fiorelli is set high among the olive groves above the village of Settignano. There are Medicean balls on a shield over the great wrought-iron gates, and the swarthy splendid banker princes appear as the Magi in the faded fresco painting of the Nativity in the chapel. They have knelt there in the straw of the stable of Bethlehem for more than four hundred years. The *nobili* of Florence were used to loiter long ago on the terrace in the shade of the five cypresses, and women, famous or infamous, but always beautiful, listened to sonnets said and songs sung in their honour in the scented idleness of the rose garden. The villa belonged first to handsome, reckless Giuliano, the lover of Simonetta and others, and the father of a Pope, and when the

dagger thrusts of the Pazzi put an end to his short life his elder brother and lord, Lorenzo, held it for a while before he sold it to the Salviati. So it passed through many hands until at last Hilaire Avenel bought it and filled it with the books and armour that he loved. There were Spanish suits, gold-chased, in the hall, Moorish swords and lances, and steel hauberks on the staircase, and stray arquebuses, greaves and gauntlets everywhere. They were all rather dusty, since Hilaire [184] was unmarried; but he was well served nevertheless. He was not a sociable person, and no Florentine had ever partaken of a meal with him, but it was currently reported that he sat through a ten-course dinner every night of his life, crumbling the bread at the side of his plate, and invariably refusing to partake of nine of the dishes that were handed in form by the old butler.

“It’s real mean of your brother to keep his lovely garden shut up all through the spring,” the Marchesa Lorenzoni had said once to Jean, and he had replied, “Well, it is his.”

That seemed final, but the present Marchesa and late relict of Jonas P. Whittaker of Pittsburg was not so easily put off. She was apt to motor up to Settignano more than once in the May month of flowers; the intractable Hilaire was never at home to her, but she revenged herself by multitudinous kind inquiries. He was an invalid, but he disliked to be reminded of his infirmities almost as much as he did most women and all cackle about the weather.

Jean lived with him when not playing Chopin at the ends of the earth, and when the two were together the elder declared himself to be perfectly happy. “I only want you.”

“And your first editions and your Cellini helmet.”

When Jean came back from his American tour his brother was quick to notice a change in him, [185] and when on the day after his Florentine concert he came in late for a dinner which he ate in silence, Hilaire spoke his mind. They were together in the library. Jean had taken a book down from the shelves but he was not reading it.

“Bad coffee.”

“Was it?”

Hilaire was watching his brother’s face. It seemed to him that there were lines in it that he had not seen before, and the brown eyes that gazed so intently into the fire were surely very tired.

He began again rather awkwardly. “You have been here a week, Jean.”

“Yes.”

“Did the concert go off well?”

“Oh, well enough. As usual.”

“You went away alone in the Itala car before nine this morning and you came back scarcely an hour ago. What is the matter? Is there some new trouble? Jean, dear man, I am older than you; I have only you. What is it?”

Jean reached out for his tobacco pouch. “Hilaire,” he said very gravely, after a pause, which he occupied in filling his pipe. “You remember I asked you to do anything, anything, for a girl named Olive Agar. You have never heard from her or of her?”

“Never.” [186]

“Ah,” he sighed, “I have been to Siena. There was some affair—early in September she came to Florence, to the Lorenzoni of all people in the world.”

Hilaire whistled.

“Yes, I know,” the younger man said gloomily, as though he had spoken. “That woman! What she must have suffered in these months! Well, she left them suddenly at the beginning of November.”

“Where is she now?”

“That’s just it. I don’t know.”

“Why did she leave Siena?”

“There was some trouble—a bad business,” he answered reluctantly. “She lived with some cousins, and one of them committed suicide. She came away to escape the horror and all the talk, I suppose.”

“Ah, I need not ask why she left the Lorenzoni woman. No girl in her senses would stay an hour longer than she could help with her.”

“Hilaire, I think I half hoped to see her at the concert yesterday. When I came on the platform I looked for her, and I am sure I should have seen her in that crowd if she had been there. She is different, somehow. I played like a machine for the first time in my life, I think, and during the interval the manager asked me why I had not given the nocturne that was down on the programme. I said something about a necessary alteration at the last moment, but I don’t know [187] now what I did play. I was thinking of her. A girl alone has a bad time in this world.”

“You are going to find her? Is she in love with you?”

Jean flushed. “I can’t answer that.”

“That’s all right. What I really wanted to know was if you cared for her. I see you do. Oh, Lord!” The older man sighed heavily as he put down his coffee-cup. “I wish you would play to me.”

Jean went into the music-room, leaving the folding doors between open, and sat down at the piano. There was no light but the moon’s, and Hilaire saw the beloved head dark against the silvery grey of the wall beyond. The skilled hands let loose a torrent of harmonies.

“Damn women!” said Hilaire, under cover of the fortissimo.

He spent some hours in the library on the following day re-arranging and dusting his books, lingering over them, reading a page here and there, patting their old vellum-bound backs fondly before he returned them to their shelves. They absorbed him, and yet the footman bringing in his tea on a tray heard him saying, “I must not worry.”

Jean had always come to him with his troubles ever since he was a child, and the worst of all had been brought about by a woman. That was years ago now. Hilaire had been away from England, [188]
and he had come back to find his brother aged and altered—and married.

They had got on so well together without women in these latter years that Hilaire had hoped they might live and die in peace, but it seemed that it was not to be. Jean had gone out again in the car to look for his Olive. Well, if she made him happy Hilaire thought they might get on very well after all. But he had forebodings, and later, he sat frowning at the white napery and glittering glass and silver reflected in the polished walnut wood of his well-appointed table, and he refused soup and fish with unnecessary violence. Jean loved this girl and she could make him happy if she would, but would she? She was evidently not of a “coming-on disposition”; she was good, and Jean was, unfortunately, still married to the other.

It had been raining all day. The wind moaned in the trees and sighed in the chimney, and now and again the blazing logs on the hearth hissed as drops fell on them from above.

“There is a good fire in the signorino’s dressing-room, I hope. He has been out all day, and it is so stormy that—”

“The signorino has come in, *eccellenza*. He—he brought a lady with him. She seemed faint and ill, and I sent for the gardener’s wife to come and look after her. I have given her the blue room, and [189]
the housekeeper is with her now. She was busy with the dinner when she first came.” The old butler rubbed his hands together.

“I hope I did right,” he said after a pause.

Hilaire roused himself. “Oh, quite right, of course. She will want something to eat.”

“I have sent up a tray—”

“Ah, when?”

“He—here he is.”

The old man drew back as Jean came in. “I am sorry to be late, Hilaire.”

“It does not matter.”

Thereafter both sat patiently waiting for the end of a dinner that seemed age-long. When, at last, they were alone Jean rose to his feet; he was very pale and his brown eyes glittered.

“Did Stefano tell you? I have found her and brought her here.”

“Oh, she has come, has she?”

“You think less of her for that. Ah, you will misjudge her until you know her. Wait.”

He hurried out of the room.

Hilaire stood on the hearth with his back to the fire. He repeated his formula, but there was a not unkindly light in his tired eyes, and when presently the door was opened and the girl came in he smiled.

The club foot, of which he was nervously conscious at times, held him to his place, but she came forward until she was close to him.

“You are his brother,” she began. “I—what a good fire.” [190]

She knelt down on the bear skin and stretched her hands to the blaze. Hilaire noticed that she was excessively thin; the rose-flushed cheeks were hollow and the curves of the sweet cleft chin too sharp. He looked at her as she crouched at his feet; the nape of the slim neck showed a very pure white against the shabby black of her dress, there were fine threads of gold in the soft brown tangle of her hair.

Jean was dragging one of the great armchairs closer.

“You are cold,” he said anxiously. “Come and sit here.”

She rose obediently.

“Have you had any dinner?” asked Hilaire.

“Yes; they brought me some soup in my room. I am not hungry now.”

She spoke very simply, like a child. Jean had rifled all the other chairs to provide her with a sufficiency of cushions, and now he brought her a footstool.

“I think I must take my shoes off,” she said. “So cold—you see they let the water in, and—”

“Take them off at once,” ordered Hilaire, and he watched, still with that faint smile in his eyes, as Jean knelt to do his bidding.

“That’s very nice,” sighed the girl. “I never knew before that real happiness is just having lots to [191] eat and being warm.”

The two men looked at each other.

“I have often wondered about you,” she said to Hilaire presently. “Your eyes are just like his. I think if I had known that I should have had to come before; but you see I promised Cardinal Jacopo of Portugal—in San Miniato—that I would not. What am I talking about?” Her voice broke and she covered her face with her hands.

“Oh, my God!” Jean would have gone to her, but his brother laid a restraining hand on his arm.

“Leave her alone,” he said. “She will be all right to-morrow. It’s only excitement, nervous exhaustion. She must rest and eat. Wait quietly and don’t look at her.”

Jean moved restlessly about the room; Hilaire, gravely silent, seemed to see nothing.

So the two men waited until the girl was able to control her sobs.

“I am so sorry,” she said presently. “I have made you uncomfortable; forgive me.”

“Will you take a brandy-and-soda if I give it you?”

“Yes, if you think it will do me good.”

Hilaire limped across to the sideboard. He was scarcely gone half a minute, but when he came back with a glass of the mixture he had prescribed he saw his brother kneeling at the girl’s side, [192] his arms about her, his face hidden in the folds of her skirt.

“Jean! Get up!” he said very sharply. “Pull yourself together.”

Olive sat stiffly erect; her swollen, tear-stained lids hid the blue eyes, her pale, quivering lips formed words that were inaudible.

Hilaire ground his teeth. “Get up!”

After a while the lover loosed his hold; he bent to kiss the girl’s feet; then he rose and went silently out of the room. Hilaire listened for the closing of another door before he rang the bell.

---

## CHAPTER X [193]

For some days and nights Olive lived only to eat and sleep. When she woke it was to hear a kind old voice urging her to take hot milk or soup, to see a kind old face framed in white hair set off by black lace lappets; and yet whenever she closed her eyes at first she was aware of a passionate aching echo of words said that was sad as the sound of the sea in a shell. “I love you—I love you —” until at last sleep helped to knit up the ravelled sleave of care.

Every morning there were fresh roses for her.

“The signorino hopes you are better.”

“Oh, much better, thank you.” And after a while a day came when she felt really strong enough to get up. She dressed slowly and came down and out on to the terrace. The crumbling stones of the balustrade were moss-grown, as was the slender body of the bronze Mercury, poised for flight and dark against the pale illimitable blue of the December sky. Hilaire Avenel never tried to make Nature neat; the scarlet leaves of the Virginia creeper came fluttering down and were scattered on the worn black and white mosaic of the pavement; they showed like fire flickering in the [194] sombre green of the cypresses. Beyond and below the garden, the olive and ilex woods, and the steep red roofs of Settignano, lay Florence, a city of the plain, and wreathed in a delicate mist. There was the great dome of Santa Maria dei Fiori; the tortuous silver streak that was Arno, spanned by her bridges; there was Giotto’s tower, golden-white and rose golden, there the campanile of the Badia, the grim old Bargello, and the battlemented walls of the Palazzo Vecchio; farther still, across the river, the heights of San Miniato al Monte, Bellosguardo, and Mont’ Oliveto, cypress crowned.

Two white rough-coated sheep-dogs came rushing up the steps from the garden to greet Olive with sharp barks of joy, and Hilaire was not slow to follow. Olive still thought him very like his brother, an older and greyer Jean.

“I have been so looking forward to showing you the garden,” he said hurriedly in his kind eagerness to put her at her ease. “There are still a few late chrysanthemums, and you will find blue and white violets in the grass by the sundial.”

They passed down the steps together and through the green twilight of the orange groves, and came to a little fountain in the midst of a space of lawn set about with laurels. Hilaire threw a [195] biscuit into the pool, and the dark water gleamed with silver and gold as the fish rushed at it.

“I flatter myself that all the living things in this garden know me,” he said. “I bar the plainer kinds of insects and scorpions, of course; but the small green lizards are charming, aren’t they?”

“Mamie Whittaker had one on a gold chain. She used to wear it sometimes.”

“She would,” he said drily. “The young savage! Better go naked than torture harmless things.”

“This place is perfect,” sighed Olive; and then, “You have no home in France?”

“We should have; but our great-grandfather was guillotined in Paris during the Terror, and his wife and child came to England. Years later, when they might have gone back they would not. Why should they? Napoleon had given the Avenel estates to one of his ruffians, who had since seceded to the Bourbon and so made all secure. Besides, they were happy enough. Marie Louis Hilaire gave music lessons, and the Marquise scrubbed and cooked and patched their clothes—she, who had been the Queen’s friend, and so they managed to keep the little home together. Presently the young man married, and then Jean Marie appeared on the scene. We have a picture of him at the age of five, in a nankeen frock and a frill. Our mother was a Hungarian—hence [196] Jean’s music, I suppose—and there is Romany blood on that side. These are our antecedents. You will not be surprised at our vagaries now?”

Olive smiled. “No, I shall remember the red heels of Versailles, English bread and butter, and the gipsy caravan.”

“Jean has fetched your books from the Monte di Pietà. Marietta found the tickets in your coat pocket. You don’t mind?”

Looking at her he saw her eyes fill with tears, and he hurried on: “No rubbish, I notice. Are you fond of reading?”

“Yes.”

“I was wondering if you would care to undertake a work for me.”

“I should be glad to do anything,” she said anxiously.

“I have some thousands of books in the villa. Those I have collected myself I know—they are all in the library—but there are many that were left me by my father, and others that came from an uncle, and they are all piled up in heaps in the empty rooms on the second floor. I want someone to sort them out, catalogue, and arrange them for me. Would you care to do it?”

“Yes, indeed.”

“That’s all right then,” he said hastily. “I’ll get a carpenter in at once to put up some more shelves ready for them. And I think you had better stay on in the villa, if you don’t mind. It will be [197] more convenient. The salary will be two hundred lire a month, paid in advance.”

“Your kindness—I can’t express my gratitude—” she began tremulously.

“Nonsense! This is a business transaction, and I am coming out of it very well. I should not get a man to do the work for that absurdly small sum. I am underpaying you on purpose because I hate women.”

Olive laughed. “Commend me to misogynists henceforth.”

She wanted to begin at once, but her host assured her that he would rather she waited until the shelves were put up.

“You will have to sort them out several times, according to date, language and subject. Perhaps Jean can help you when he returns. He is away just now.”

Watching her, he saw the deepening of the rose.

“I—I can’t remember exactly what happened the night I came, Mr Avenel. You know I had not been able to find work, and though my *padrona* was kind she was very poor too. She pawned my things for me, but they fetched so little, and I had not had anything to eat for ever so long when he came. He has not gone away because of me, has he?”

Hilaire threw the fish another biscuit; it fell among the lily leaves at the feet of the weather- [198] stained marble nymph of the fountain.

“I must decline to answer,” he said gravely, after a pause. “I understand that you are twenty-three and old enough therefore to judge for yourself, and I do not intend to influence either you or Jean, if I can help it. You will be perfectly free to do exactly what you think right, my dear girl. I will only give you one bit of advice, and that is, look at life with your eyes wide open. Don’t blink! This is Friday, and Jean is coming to see you on Wednesday.”

## CHAPTER XI [199]

Olive told herself that Hilaire was very good to her in the days that followed. He came sometimes into the room where she was, to find her sitting on the floor amid the piles of books she was trying to reduce to some kind of order.

“You do not get tired? I am afraid they are rather dusty.”

“Oh, not at all,” she assured him. She was swathed in a blue linen apron of Marietta’s and had tied a cotton handkerchief over her hair. “I like to feel I am doing something for you,” she said. “I wish—you have been—you are so kind.”

On the Wednesday morning she covered some of the books with brown paper and pasted labels on their backs. She tried not to listen for the creaking of the great gates as they swung open, for the grating of wheels against the stones, for Jean’s voice calling to his brother, for his quick step upon the stair, but she heard all as she wrote *Vita Nuova* on the slip intended for an early edition of the *Rape of the Lock*, and put the *Decameron* aside with some sermons and commentaries that [200] were to be classified as devotional literature. He did not come to her then, but she was desperately afraid that he might. “I am not ready ... not ...”

When, later, she came into the dining-room she seemed to be perfectly at her ease. Jean’s eyes had been fixed on the door, and they met hers eagerly as she came forward. “Are you better?” he asked, and then bit his lip, thinking he had said the wrong thing.

“Oh, yes. But—but you look pale and thinner.”

Her little air of gay indifference fell away from her. As he still held her hand she felt the tears coming and longed to be able to run upstairs and take some more sal volatile, but Hilaire came to the rescue.

“Well, let’s have lunch,” he said. “I hate tepid food.”

When they had taken their places Jean gave the girl a letter.

“It came for you to the Lorenzoni. I called at the porter’s lodge this morning and Ser Gigia gave it me.”

“Such a waste of good things I never saw,” the butler said afterwards to his wife. “As you know, the *padrone* never eats more than enough to fill a bird, but I have seen the signorino hungry, and the young lady too. To-day, however, they ate nothing, though the *frittata* was fit to melt in one’s mouth. I should not have been ashamed to set it before the Archangel Gabriel, and he would have [201] eaten it, since it is certain that the Blessed One has never been in love.”

After the meal, to which no one indeed had done justice, Hilaire explained that he was going to write some letters.

The younger man looked at Olive. “Come with me,” he said abruptly. “I want to play to you.”

“I want to hear you,” she said as she rose from the table.

He followed her into the music-room and shut the door. “Well?”

She chose to misunderstand him. “It is charming. Just what a shrine of sound should be.”

The grand piano stood out from the grey-green background of the walls beyond, there was a bronze statuette of Orpheus with his lute on a twisted Byzantine column of white and gold mosaic, and a long cushioned divan set on one side broke the long lines of light on the polished floor.

“What are you going to play?” she asked.

“Nothing, at present,” he said, smiling at her. “I want to talk to you first. You are not frightened?”

“No.” She sat on the divan and he stood before her, looking down into her eyes.

“I think I had better try to tell you about my wife,” he said. “May I sit here? And may I smoke?”

“Yes.” She drew her skirts aside to make room for him next to her. “I want to hear you,” she said [202] again.

“Imagine me, a boy of twenty-two, convalescing in country lodgings after an illness that seemed to have taken the marrow out of my bones. Hilaire was in Japan, and I—a callow fledgling from the nest—was very sick and sorry for myself. There were some people living in rather a large house at the other end of the village who took notice of me. They were the only ones, and I have thought since that my acquaintance with them really did for me with everyone else. They were not desirable—but—well, I was too young, and just then too physically weak to avoid their more pressing attentions. Old Seldon was one of those flushed, swollen men whose collars seem always to be too small for them. He tried to be pleasant, but it was not a great success. There were two daughters at home, and Gertrude was the eldest. She had been married, and the man had died, leaving her penniless. As you may suppose she had not come back to veal. I was sorry for her then because she seemed a good sort, and she was very kind to me; she was five years my senior

—”

“Go on,” Olive said.

“I used to go to the house nearly every evening. She sang well, and I used to play her accompaniments, while the old man hung about the sideboard. He never left us alone, and the younger girl, Violet, used to meet the rector’s son in the stables then. I heard that afterwards. They lived anyhow, and owed money to all the tradespeople round. [203]

“One night I was awakened by a knocking outside; my landlady slept at the back, and she was deaf besides, so I went down myself. The wind put my candle out as I opened the door, but I saw a woman standing there in the rain, and I asked her what she wanted. She made no answer, but pushed past me into the passage, and went into my sitting-room. I followed, of course.

“Well, perhaps you have guessed that it was Gertrude. Her yellow hair hung down and about her face; she was only half dressed, and her bare arms and shoulders were all wet. Her skirts were torn and stained with mud. She told me her father had turned her out of the house in a drunken fury and she had come to me. Even then I wondered why she had not gone to some woman—surely she might have found shelter—however, she had come to me. I was going to call up my landlady, but she would not allow it because she said that no one but I need ever know. She would creep home through the fields soon after sunrise and her sister would let her in. The old man would be sleeping heavily.... The end of it was that I let her go up to my room while I lay on the sofa in the little parlour. The horsehair bolster was deucedly hard, but I was young, and when I did get off I slept well. When I woke it was nearer eight than seven, and I had just scrambled up when my landlady came in. One look at her face was enough. I understood that Gertrude had overslept herself too. [204]

“The sequel was hateful. There was a frightful scandal, of course; the father raved, the women cried, the rector talked to me seriously, and—Olive, mark this—Gertrude would not say anything. I married her and we came away.”

“It was a trap,” cried Olive.

“We had not one single thing in common, and you know when there is no love sex is a barrier set up by the devil between human souls. After some years of mutual misery I brought her here. Poor Hilaire has hated respectable women ever since—she was that, if that counts when there is nothing else. Just virtue, with no saving graces. She is living in London now, is much esteemed, and regularly exceeds her allowance.”

“Was she pretty?”

Jean had let his pipe go out, and now he relit it. “Oh, yes,” he said, “I suppose so. Frizzy hair and all that. I fancy she has grown stout now. She is the kind that spreads.”

“Life is all so hateful,” sighed the girl. Jean moved away from her and went to the window. Hilaire was limping across the terrace towards the garden steps. When he was gone out of sight Jean came back into the room. [205]

“My brother is unhappy too. The woman he loved died. Oh, Olive, are we to be lonely always because the law will not give me a divorce from the woman who was never really my wife, never dear to me or near to me as you are? Joy is within our reach, a golden rose on the tree of life, and it is for you to gather it or to hold your hand. Don’t answer me yet for God’s sake. Wait!”

He went to the piano and opened it.

Rain ... rain dripping on the roof through the long hours of night, and the weary moaning of the wakeful wind. Thronging memories of past years, past youth, past joy, past laughter echoing and re-echoing in one man’s hungry heart. Light footsteps of children never to be born ... and then the heavy tread of men carrying a coffin, and the last sound of all—the clanging of an iron door....

The grave ... the grave ... it held the boy who had loved her, and presently, surely, it would hold this man too, sealing his kind lips with earth, closing his brown eyes in an eternal darkness.

He played, as thousands had said, divinely, not only with his hands but with his soul. The music that had been a work of genius became a miracle when he interpreted it, and indeed it seemed that virtue went out of him. His face was drawn and pale and a pulse beat in his cheek. Olive, gazing at him through a blur of tears, knew that she had never longed for anything in her life as she longed now to comfort this pain expressed in ripples, and low murmurings, and great crashing waves of the illimitable sea of sound. Her heart ached with the pity that is a woman’s way of loving, and as he left the piano she rose too. He uttered a sort of cry as she swayed towards him, and clasped her in his arms. [206]

“I love you,” he said, his lips so close to hers that she felt rather than heard the words.

---

## CHAPTER XII [207]

Jean came to the villa a little before noon on the following day. Hilaire, who was in the library, heard his voice in the hall calling the dogs, heard him whistling some little song tune as he

opened and shut all the doors one after the other.

"'*O l'amor e' come un nocciuola*
*Se non se apre non si può mangiarla—*'"

"Hilaire, where are you? I thought I should find you on the terrace this fine morning. Where is she?" he added eagerly as he laid a great bunch of roses down on the table. "Is her headache better? Has not she come down yet?"

He looked across the room to where his brother's grey head just showed above the high carved back of his chair.

"Hilaire! Why don't you answer?"

In the silence that ensued he distinctly heard the ticking of the clock on the mantelpiece and the falling of the soft wood ashes in the grate; the beating of his own heart sounded loud to him. One of the dogs was scratching at the door and whining to be let in.

"Hilaire."

"She is gone." [208]

"Gone?"

"Yes. She left this letter for you."

"Ah, give it to me." He opened and read it hurriedly.

"I thought you meant dead at first," he said. His brown eyes had lost the light that had been in them and were melancholy as before; he stood still by the table looking down upon his roses. They would fade, and she would never see them now. Never ... never ...

"Come and sit by the fire and let's talk it over quietly," said Hilaire. "Oh, damn women," he mumbled as he drew at his pipe—the fifth that morning. It was the first time in a week that he had uttered his pet expletive. "What does she say?"

"You can read her letter."

"Would she mind?"

"Oh, no," Jean said bitterly. "She loves you—what she calls loving—next best after me. She told me so."

Hilaire carefully smoothed the crumpled, blotted page out on his knee.

> "My dearest Jean,—I am going away because I am a coward. I dare not live with you, and I dare not ask you to forgive me. Last night as I lay awake I thought and thought about my feeling for you and I was sure that it was love. I used to think of you often last summer and to [209]
> wonder where you were and what you were doing, and I hoped you had not forgotten me. I did not love you then, but I suppose my thoughts of you kept my heart's door open for you, and certainly they helped to keep out someone else who came and tried to get admittance. Oh, one must suffer to keep love perfect, but isn't it worth while? You may not believe me now when I say that if I cared for you less I should stay, but it is true. Oh, Jean, even when we were so happy for a few minutes yesterday something in me looked beyond into the years to come and was afraid. Not of you; I trust you, dearest; but of the world. Men would stare at me and laugh and whisper together, and women would look away, and I know I should not be able to bear it. I am not brave like that. Oh, every word I write must hurt you, I know. Remember that I love you now and shall always. Good-bye.—Your
>
> "Olive."

"I should keep this."

"I am going to. Hilaire, did you know she was going? Did she tell you?"

The older man answered quietly: "Yes, I knew, and I sent her to the station in the motor. I had promised a strict neutrality, Jean, and she was right to go. Some women, good women, may be strong enough to bear all the suffering that is entailed upon them by a known irregularity in their [210]
lives. She is not. It would probably have killed her though I am not saying that she would not have been happy sometimes, when she could forget her shame."

Jean flinched as though his brother had struck him. "Don't use that word."

“Well, what else would it be? What else would the world call it? And women listen to what the world says. ‘Good name in man or woman is the immediate jewel of their souls’; Othello said something like that, and it’s often true. Besides, you know, this woman is pure in herself, and from what she told me I understand that she has seen something of the seamy side of love lately —enough to inspire her with dread. She is afraid, and her fear is exquisite; a very fine and rare thing. It is the bloom on the fruit and should not be brushed off with an ungentle hand. Poor child! Don’t blame her as she blames herself or I shall begin to think she is too good for you.”

Jean sat leaning forward staring into the fire.

“Do you realise that when I brought her here it was from starvation in a garret? Where is she going? What will she do? Oh, God! The poor little slender body! Do you remember she said it was happiness just to be warm and have enough to eat?”

“That’s all right,” Hilaire said hastily. “She is going to a good woman, a friend she made in Siena. [211]
The letter you brought was from her, and she wrote to say she had been ill and wished Olive could come and be with her for a while.”

“I see! And she was glad to get away.”

“My dear man, did you really think she would be so easily won? She loves you, and you not only made love to her yesterday afternoon; you played to her—I heard you—and I knew she would have to say ‘Yes’ to everything. Now she says ‘No,’ but you must not think she does not care.” Hilaire got up, came across to where his brother sat, and laid a caressing hand on his shoulder. “Dear Jean, will it comfort you to hear me swear she means every word of that letter? It’s not all over. You will come together in the end. Her poor blue eyes were drowned in tears—”

“Oh, don’t,” Jean said brokenly. The hard line of his lips relaxed. He hid his face in his hands.

Hilaire went out of the room.

---

[213]

# BOOK III.—ROME

## CHAPTER I

Olive was alone in the compartment of the train that bore her away from Florence and from Jean. She had a book; it lay open on her lap, and she had tried to read, but the lines all ran together and the effort to concentrate her thoughts made her head ache. She was very unhappy. It seemed to her that now indeed life was emptied of all sweets and the taste of it was as dust and ashes in her mouth. She was leaving youth and joy behind; or rather, she had killed them and left a man to bury them. At Orvieto she nearly broke down. It would be so easy to get out and cross over to the other platform and there await the next train back to Florence. She had her hand upon the handle of the door when a boy with little flasks of wine in a basket came up and asked her to buy, and as she answered him she heard the cry of “*Partenza!*” It was too late; the moment had passed, and after a while she knew that she was glad she had not yielded. She was doing the [214]
right thing. What was the old French motto? “*Fais ce que doit, advienne que pourra.*” The brave words comforted her a little. She was very tired, and presently she slept.

She was awakened by the discordant yells of the Roman *facchini* on the station platform. One of them carried her box to the office of the Dogana, but a large party of Americans had come by the same train and the officials were too busily engaged in turning over the contents of their innumerable Saratogas to do more than scrabble in chalk on the side of her shabby leather trunk and shake their heads at the proffered key, and soon she was in a *vettura* clattering down the wide new Via Nazionale.

Signora de Sanctis lived with her sister in one of the old streets in the lower part of the city near the Pantheon—the Via Arco della Ciambella. The houses there are built on the foundations of the Baths of Agrippa, and a brick arch, part of the great Tepidarium, remains to give the street its name. The poor fragment has been Christianised; a wayside altar sanctifies it, and a little painted shrine to the Madonna adorns the base. The buildings on that side are small and mean and overshadowed by the great yellow palace of the Spinola opposite. Olive’s friends lived over a wine shop, but the entrance was some way down the street.

“Fortunately, my dear,” as they remarked, “though really the place is very quiet. People go [215]
outside the gates to get drunk.”

Both the women seemed glad to see her. Her room was ready and a meal had been prepared and the cloth laid at one end of the work-table. The younger sister was a dressmaker too, and the floor was strewn with scraps of lining and silk. A white dress lay on the sofa, carefully folded and

covered with a sheet of tissue paper.

“You look tired, Olive. Were you not happy in Florence?”

The girl admitted that the Lorenzoni had not been very kind to her. She had left them and had been living on her savings. It had been hard to find other employment. “I want to work,” she said. “You will let me help you, and I hope to get lessons.”

She asked to be allowed to wash the plates and dishes and put them away in the tiny kitchen. She was in a mood to bear anything better than the idleness that left room for her own sad thoughts, and she wished that they would let her do some sewing. “I am not good at needlework, but I can hem and put on buttons,” she pleaded.

Signora Giulia smiled at her. She was small, and she had a pale, dragged look and many lines about her weak eyes. “No, thank you, my dear. I have a girl apprentice who comes during the day, and I do the cutting out and designing and the embroidery myself. You must not tire yourself [216] in the kitchen either. We have an old woman in to do *mezzo servizio*.”

It was nine o’clock, and the narrow streets were echoing now to the hoarse cries of the newsvendors: “*Tribuna!*” “*Tribuna!*”

“I will go and unpack then, and to-morrow I shall find some registry offices and try to get English lessons.”

“Yes, go, *nina*, and sleep well. You look tired. You must get stronger while you are with us.”

For a long time she could not sleep. In the summer she had played with the thought of love, and then she had been able to close her eyes and feel Jean Avenel close beside her, leaning towards her, saying that she must not be afraid, that he would not hurt her. It had been a sort of game, a childish game of make-believe that seemed to hurt no one, not even herself. But now she was hurt indeed; the remembrance of his kisses ached upon her lips.

When Tor di Rocca had asked her to go away with him she had felt that it might be worth while, that it would be pleasant to be cared for and loved, to eat and drink and die on the morrow, but the man himself had been nothing to her. A means to an end.

She had been wholly a creature of blind instincts, the will to live, to creep out of the dark into the [217] sunshine that is inherent in the animal, fighting against that other impulse, trying to root up that white fragile flower, watered throughout the centuries with blood and tears and rare and precious ointment, that thorn in some women’s hearts, their pale ideal of inviolate purity.

The spirit had warred against the flesh, and the spirit had won then and now. It had won, but not finally. She was dismayed to find that temptation was a recurrent thing. Every morning when she woke it returned to her. It would be so easy to write “Dearest, come to me.” It would be so easy to make him happy. She thought little of herself now and much of Jean. Would he stay on with his brother or go away again? Had she hurt him very much? Would he forget her? Or hate her?

During the day she trudged the streets of Rome and grew to know them well. Here, as in Florence, no one wanted to pay for learning, no one wanted an English girl for anything apparently. If she had been Swiss, and so able to speak three languages incorrectly, she might have found a place as nursery-governess; as it was, the people in the registry offices grew tired of her and she was afraid to go to them too often.

There was little for her to do in the house. The old woman who came in did the cleaning, and they lived on bread and *ricotta* cheese and a cabbage soup that was easily prepared, but sometimes [218] she was able to help with the sewing, and now and then she was allowed to take the finished work home.

“It is not fit! They will take you for an apprentice, a *sartina*.”

Olive laughed rather mirthlessly at that. “I am not proud,” she said.

“I sat up until two last night to finish the Contessa’s dress. She is always in a hurry. If only she would pay what she owes,” sighed the dressmaker.

Olive promised to bring the money back with her, and she waited a long while in the stuffy passage of the Contessa’s flat. There were imitation Abyssinian trophies on the walls, lances and daggers and shields of lathe and cardboard and painted paper. The husband was an artillery captain, and his sword stood with the umbrellas in the rack, the only real thing in that pretentious armoury.

The Contessa came out to her presently. She was a large woman, and as she was angry she seemed to swell and redden and gobble as turkeys do.

“Are you the *giovinetta*? You will take this dress away. It is not fit to put on.” She held the bodice in her hand, and as she spoke she shook it in Olive’s face. “The stitches are all awry; they are enormous; and half the embroidery is blue and the other half green. I shall make her pay for the [219] material. The dress is ruined, and it is the last she shall make for me. She must pay me, and you must tell her so.”

Olive collected her scattered wits. “If the Signora Contessa would allow me to look,” she said.

The stitches were very large, and her heart sank as she examined them. The poor women had toiled so over this work, stooping over it, straining their tired eyes. “I think we can alter it to your satisfaction, but I must ask you to be indulgent, signora. I will bring it back the day after to-morrow, if that will suit you.” She folded the bodice carefully and wrapped it in the piece of paper she had brought it in, fastening the four corners with pins.

“The skirt goes well?”

“It will do,” the Contessa admitted as she turned away. “Anacleto!”

A slender, dark-eyed youth emerged from the shadows at the far end of the passage, bringing a sound and smell of frying with him. His bare brown arms were floury and he wiped them on his striped cotton apron as he came forward to open the door. He wore a white camellia thrust behind one ear.

“It would be convenient—Signora Manara would be glad if you could pay part of her account,” faltered Olive.

The Contessa stopped short. “I could, but I will not,” she said emphatically. “She does her work too badly.” [220]

The young servant grinned at the girl as she passed out. She was half-way down the stairs when he came out on to the landing and leaned over the banisters.

“Never! Never!” he called down to her. “They never pay anyone. I am leaving to-morrow.”

The white camellia dropped at her feet. She smiled involuntarily as she stooped to gather up the token. “Men are rather dears.”

She met Ser Giulia coming down the stairs of their house. The little woman looked quickly at the bundle she carried as she asked why it had been brought back.

“She wants it altered! *Dio mio!* And I worked so hard at it. How much of the money has she given you?”

“She has given nothing; I hope she will pay when I take the work back.”

But the other began to cry. “Perhaps the stitches are large,” she said, sobbing. “I know my eyes are weak. No one will pay me, and I owe the baker more than ten lire. Soon we shall have to beg our bread in the streets.”

“Don’t,” Olive said hurriedly. “Don’t. I have been with you more than a month and I have not found work yet, but I will not be a burden to you much longer. I shall find something to do soon and then you need not do so much and we shall manage better.” [221]

“Oh, child, I know you do your best.”

“Don’t cry then. I will get money somehow. Don’t be afraid.”

---

## CHAPTER II [222]

Olive sat idly on one of the benches near the great wall in the Pincian gardens. She had been to an office in the Piazza di Spagna and had there been assured for the seventh time that there was nothing on the books. “If the signorina were a cook now, there are many people in need of cooks,” the young man behind the counter had said smilingly, and she had thanked him and come away. What else could she do?

It was getting late, and a fading light filtered through the bare interwoven branches of the planes. The shadows were lengthening in the avenues and grass-bordered paths where the seminarists had been walking in twos and threes among the playing children. They were gone now, the grave-faced young men in their black soutanes and broad beaver hats; all the people were gone.

“O Pasquina! *Birichina!*”

Olive, turning her head, saw a young woman and a child coming towards her. The little thing was clinging to its mother’s skirts, stumbling at every step, whining to be taken up, and now she dropped the white rabbit muff and the doll she was carrying into a puddle. [223]

“O Pasquina!”

The child stared open-mouthed as Olive came forward and stooped to pick up the fallen treasures, and though tears were running down her little face she made no outcry.

“See, the beautiful lady helps you,” the mother said hastily, and she sat down on the bench at Olive’s side and lifted the baby on to her lap to comfort her.

“She is tired. We have been to the Campo Marzo to buy her a fine hat with white feathers,” she explained.

Olive looked at her with interest. She was not at all pretty; her round snubby face was red and she had a bruise on her chin, and yet she was somehow attractive. Her small, twinkling blue eyes were so kind, and her hair was beautiful, smooth, shining, and yellow as straw. She wore no hat.

Her name was Rosina. The signorino was always very good, and he gave her an afternoon off when she asked for it. On Christmas night, for instance, she had drunk too much wine, and she had fallen down in the street and hurt herself. The next day her head ached so, and when the signorino saw she was not well he said she might go home and sleep. She had been working for him six weeks. What work? She seemed surprised at the question.

"I am a model. My face is ugly, as you see," she said in her simple, straightforward way; "but [224]
otherwise I am beautiful, and I can always get work with sculptors. The signorino is an American and he has an unpronounceable name. He is doing me as Eve, crouched on the ground and hiding my head in my arms. After the Fall, you know. Have you been to the Andreoni gallery? There is a statuette of me there called 'Morning.' This is the pose."

She clasped her hands together behind her head, raising her chin a little. Olive observed the smooth long throat, the exquisite lines of the shoulders and breast and hips. Pasquina slipped off her mother's knees.

"Are you well paid?"

"It depends on the artist. Some are so poor that they cannot give, and others will not. The schools allow fifteen soldi an hour, but the signorino is paying me twenty-five soldi. In the evenings I sing and dance at a *caffè* near the station."

Olive hesitated. "Do—do artists ever want models dressed?"

Rosina looked at her quickly. "Oh, yes, when they are as pretty as you are. But you are well educated—one sees that—it is not fit work for such as you."

"Never mind that," Olive said eagerly. "How does one begin being a model? I will try that. Will you help me?"

Rosina beamed at her. "*Sicuro!* We will go to Varini's school in the Corso if you like. The woman [225]
in the newspaper kiosk in the Piazza di Spagna knows me, and I can leave Pasquina with her. *An'iamo!*"

The two girls went together down the wide, shallow steps of the Trinità dei Monti with the child between them.

Poor little Pasquina was the outward and visible sign of her mother's inward and hopelessly material gracelessness; she symbolised the great gulf fixed between smirched Roman Rosina and Jean's English rose in their different understanding of their own hearts' uses. Olive believed love to be the way to heaven; Rosina knew it, or thought she knew it, as a means of livelihood.

The model was very evidently not only familiar with the studios. The cabmen on the rank in the piazza hailed her with cries of "Rosi"; she was greeted by beggars at the street corners, dustmen, *carabinieri*, crossing-sweepers, and Olive was not wholly unembarrassed. Yet Rosina escaped the vulgarity of some who might be called her betters as the world goes by being simply natural. When she was amused she laughed aloud, when she was tired she yawned as openly and flagrantly as any duchess. In manners extremes meet, and the giggle and the sneer are the disastrous half measures of the ill-bred, the social greasers. Rosina had never been sly in her life; [226]
she was ever as simply without shame as Eve before the Fall, and lawless because she knew no law. The darkness of Northern cities is tainted and cold and cannot bring forth such kindly things as the *rosine*—little roses—that spring up in the warm, sweet Roman dust.

"Here is Varini's."

They passed through a covered passage into a little garden overgrown with laurels and gnarled old pepper trees; there was a fountain with gold fish, and green arums were springing up about a broken faun's head set on a pedestal of *verd' antico*. Some men were standing together in the path, a pretty dark-eyed peasant girl with them. They all turned to stare, and the *cioccara* put out her tongue as Olive went by. Rosina instantly replied in kind.

"*Ohè! Fortunata! Benedetta ragazza!* Resting as usual? Does Lorenz still beat you?"

She described the antecedents and characteristics of Lorenz.

The slower-witted country girl had a more limited vocabulary. Her eyes glared in the shadow of her white coif. "Ah," she gasped. "*Brutta bestia!*" and she turned her back.

The men laughed, and Rosina laughed with them as she knocked on a green painted door in the wall. It was opened by a burly, bearded man, tweed-clad, and swathed in a stained painting [227]
apron.

"Oh, *Professore*, here is a friend of mine who wants work."

"Come in," he said shortly, and they followed him into a large untidy studio. A Pompeian fruit-seller in a black frame, a study for a Judgment of Paris on a draped easel, and on another easel the portrait of an old lady just begun. There were stacks of canvases on the floor and on all the chairs.

“Turn to the light,” the artist said brusquely; and then, as Olive obeyed him, “Don’t be frightened. You are new, I see. You are so pink and white that I thought you were painted. You are not Italian?”

“No.”

“What, then?”

She was silent.

He smiled. “Ah, well, it does not matter. You can come to the pavilion on Monday at five and sit to the evening class for a week. You understand? Wait a minute.” He went to the door and called one of the young men in from the garden.

“Here is a new model, Mario. I have engaged her for the evening class. What do you think of her?”

“*Carina assai*,” approved Mario. He was a round-faced, snub-nosed youth with clever brown eyes set very far apart, and a humorous mouth. “*Carina assai!*” he repeated.

“Fifteen soldi the hour, from five to seven-thirty,” said the professor. “Come a little before the [228]
time on Monday; the porter will show you what costume you must wear and I shall be there to pose you.”

“Now I shall take you to M’sieur Michelin,” Rosina said when they had left Varini’s. “He is looking for a type, and perhaps you will please him. He is *strano*, but good always, and he pays well.”

“It is not tiring you?”

“*Ma che!* I must see that you begin well and with the right people. Some painters are *canaglia*. Ah, I know that,” the girl said with a little sigh and a shrug of her shoulders.

They went by way of the Via Babuino across the Piazza di Spagna, and up the little hill past the convent of English nuns to the Villa Medici. Rosina rang the gate-bell, and the old braided Cerberus admitted them grumblingly. “You are late. But if it is M’sieur Camille—”

Camille Michelin, bright particular star of the French Prix de Rome constellation, lived and worked in one of the more secluded garden-studios of the villa; it was deep set in the ilex wood, and the girls came to it by a narrow winding path, box-edged, and strewn with dead leaves. A light shone in one of the upper windows; the great man was there and he came down the creaking wooden stairs himself to open the door.

“Who is it? Rosina? I have put away the Anthony canvas for a month and I will let you know when [229]
I want you again.”

“But, signorino, I have brought you a type.”

“What!” he said eagerly, in his execrable Italian. “Fresh, sweet, clean?”

“*Sicuro.*”

“I do not believe you. You are lying.”

Camille was picturesque from the crown of his flaxen head to the soles of his brown boots; his pallor was interesting, his blue eyes remarkable; he habitually wore rust-coloured velveteen; he smoked cigarettes incessantly. All men who knew and loved his work saw in him a decadent creature of extraordinary charm; and yet, in spite of his “Aholibah,” his “Salome,” and his horribly beautiful, unfinished study of Fulvia piercing the tongue of Cicero, in spite of his Byron-cum-Baudelaire after Velasquez and Vandyke exterior he always managed to be quite boyishly simple and sincere.

“Where is she?” Then, as his eyes met Olive’s, he cried, “Not you, mademoiselle?” His surprise was as manifest as his pleasure. “My friends have sworn that I could never paint a wholesome picture. Now I will show them. When can you come?”

“Monday morning.”

“Do not fail me,” he implored. “Such harpies have been here to show themselves to me; fat, [230]
brown, loose-lipped things with purple-shadowed eyes. But you are perfect; divine bread-and-butter. They think they are clean because they have washed in soap and water, but it is the stainless soul I want. It must shine through my canvas as it does through Angelico’s.”

“I hope I shall please you,” faltered the girl. “I—I only pose draped.”

He looked at her quickly. “Very well,” he said, “I will remember. It is your head I want. You are not Roman; have you sat to any other man here?”

“No. I am going to Varini’s in the evenings next week.”

“Ah! Well, don’t let anyone else get hold of you. Gontrand will be trying to snap you up. He is so tired of the *cioccare*. What shall I call you?”

“Nothing. I have no name.”

“I shall give you one. You shall be called child. Come at nine and you will find the door open.” He fumbled in his pockets for some silver. “Here, Rosina, this is for the little one.”

---

## CHAPTER III [231]

The virtue that bruises not only the heel of the Evil One but the heart of the beloved is never its own reward. The thought of Jean’s aching loneliness oppressed Olive far more than her own. She believed that she had done right in leaving him, but no consciousness of her own rectitude sustained her, and she was pitifully far from any sense of self-satisfaction. Her head hung dejectedly in the cold light of its aureole. Sometimes she hated herself for being one of the dull ninety-and-nine who never stray and who need no forgiveness, and yet she clung to her dear ideal of love thorn-crowned, white, and clean.

She had hoped to be able to help her friends, but that hope had faded, and she had been very near despair. There was something pathetic now in her intense joy at the thought of earning a few pence. She lied to the kind women at home because she knew they would not understand. They might believe the way to the Villa Medici to be the primrose path that leads to everlasting fire—they probably would if they had ever heard of Camille. She told them she had found lessons, and the wolf seemed to skulk growlingly away from the door as she uttered the words. [232]

“You need not be afraid of the baker now,” she told Ser Giulia. “He shall be paid at the end of the week.”

Her waking on the Monday morning was the happiest she had known since she left Florence. She was to help to make beautiful things. Her part would be passive; but they also serve who only stand and wait. She was not of those who see degradation in the lesser forms of labour. Each worker is needed to make the perfect whole. The men who wrought the gold knots and knops of the sanctuary, who wove the veil for the Holy of Holies, were called great, but the hewers of wood and carriers of water were temple builders too, even though their part was but to raise up scaffoldings that must come down again, or to mix the mortar that is unseen though it should weld the whole. Men might pass these toilers by in silence, but God would surely praise them.

Praxiteles moulded a goddess in clay, and we still acclaim him after the lapse of some two thousand years. What of the woman who wearied and ached that his eyes might not fail to learn the least sweet curve of her? What of the patient craftsmen who hewed out the block of marble, whose eyes were inflamed, whose lungs were scarred by the white dust of it? They suffered for beauty’s sake—not, as some might say, because they must eat and live. Even slaves might get [233] bread by easier ways. But, very simply for beauty’s sake.

Olive might have soon learnt how vile such service may be in the studios of any of the *canaglia* poor Rosina knew, but Camille, that sheep in wolf’s clothing, was safe enough. What there was in him of perversity, of brute force, he expended in the portrayal of his subtly beautiful furies. His art was feverishly decadent, and those who judge a man by his work might suppose him to be a monster of iniquity. He was, in fact, an extremely clever and rather worldly-wise boy who loved violets and stone-pines and moonlight with poetical fervour, who preferred milk to champagne, and saunterings in green fields to gambling on green cloth.

That February morning was cloudless, and Rome on her seven hills was flooded in sunshine. The birds were singing in the ilex wood as Olive passed through, and Camille was singing too in his *atelier*:

> “‘*Derrière chez mon père*
> *Vive la rose.*’
> *Il y a un oranger*
> *Vive ci, vive là!*
> *Il y a un oranger,*
> *Vive la rose et le lilas!*”

“I was afraid you would be late.”

“Why?” she asked, smiling, as she came to him across the great room. [234]

“Women always are. But you are not a woman; you are an angel.”

He looked at her closely. The strong north light showed her smooth skin flawless.

“The white and rose is charming,” he said. “And I adore freckles. But your eyes are too deep; one can see that you have suffered. There is too much in them for the innocent baa-lamb picture I must paint.”

Her face fell. “I shan’t do then?”

“Dear child, you will,” he reassured her. “I shall paint your lashes and not your eyes. Your lashes and a curve of pink cheek. Now go behind that screen and put on the sprigged cotton frock you will find there, with a muslin fichu and a mob cap. I have a basket of wools here and a piece of tapestry. The sort of woman I have never painted is always doing needlework.”

Camille spent half the morning in the arrangement of the accessories that were, as he said, to suggest virtuous domesticity; then he settled the folds of the girl's skirt, the turn of her head, her hands. At last, when he was satisfied, he went to his easel and began to work. Olive had never before realised how hard it is to keep quite still. The muscles of her neck ached and her face seemed to grow stiff and set; she felt her hands quivering.

Hours seemed to pass before his voice broke the silence. "I have drawn it in," he announced. [235]
"You can rest now. Come down and see some of my pictures."

He showed her his "Salome," a Hebrew mænad, whose scarlet, parted lips ached for the desert dreamer's death; "Lucrezia Borgia," slow-smiling, crowned with golden hair; and a rough charcoal study for Queen Eleanor.

"I seem to see you as Henry's Rosamund," he said. "I wonder—the haunting shadow of coming sorrow in blue eyes. You have suffered."

"I am hungry," she answered.

He looked at his watch. "Forgive me! It is past noon. Run away, child, and come back at two."

The day seemed very long in spite of Camille's easy kindness, and the girl shrank from the subsequent sitting at Varini's.

"Why do you pose for those wretched boys?" grumbled the Prix de Rome man. "After this week you must come to me only. I must paint a Rosamund."

At sunset she hurried down the hill to the Corso, and came by way of the corridor and garden to the pavilion. The porter took her into a dingy little lumber-filled passage and left her there. A soiled pink satin frock was laid ready for her on a broken chair. As she put it on she heard a babel of voices in the class-room beyond, and she felt something like stage-fright as she fumbled at the hooks and eyes; but a clock struck the hour presently, and she went in then and climbed on to the [236]
throne. At first she saw nothing, but after a while she was aware of a group of men who stood near the door regarding her.

"*Carina.*"

"Yes, a fine colour, but too thin."

When the professor came in he made her sit in a carved chair, and gave her a fan to hold. The men moved about, choosing their places, and were silent until he left them with a gruff "*Felice notte*." Olive noticed the lad who had been called in to Varini's studio to see her; the boy who sat next him had a round, impudent face, and when presently she yawned he smiled at her.

"I will ask questions to keep you awake, but you must answer truly. Have you taken a fancy to anyone here?"

"I don't dislike you or Mario."

They rose simultaneously and bowed. "We are honoured. But why? Bembi here is a fine figure of a man."

"Enough!" growled Bembi. "You talk too much."

During the rest Olive went to look at the boys' work; it was brilliantly impressionistic. The younger had evidently founded himself on Mario, and Mario was, perhaps, a genius.

They came and sat down, one on either side of her.

"Why are you pretending to be a model?" whispered Mario. "We can see you are not. Are you [237]
hiding from someone?"

She shook her head. "I am earning my bread," she answered. "Be kind to me."

"We will." He patted her bare shoulder with the air of a grandfather, but his brown eyes sparkled.

"Why are some of the men so old, and why is some of the work so—"

"Bad." Mario squinted at Bembi's black, smudged drawing. "I will tell you. That bald man in the corner is seventy-two; painting is his amusement, and he loves models. He wants to marry Fortunata, but she won't have him because he is toothless. Once, twenty-five years ago, he sold a watercolour for ten lire and he has never forgotten it."

"Really because he is toothless?"

"Oh, he is mad too, and she is afraid of him. Cesare and I are the only ones here who will make you look human. It is a pity, as you are really *carina*."

He patted her shoulder again and pinched her ear, and Cesare passed his arm about her waist. She struggled to free herself.

"Let her go!" cried the other men, and, flushed and dishevelled, she took refuge on the throne. The pose was resumed, and the room settled down to work again.

She kept very still, but after a while the tears that filled her eyes overflowed, ran down her [238]

cheeks, and dripped upon the hand that held the fan.

“I am sorry,” cried Mario.

“And I.”

“Forgive me.”

“And me.”

“I was a *mascalzone*!”

“And I.”

“Forgive them for our sakes,” growled Bembi, “or they will cackle all night.”

Olive laughed a little in spite of herself, but she was very tired and they had hurt her. The marks of Cesare’s fingers showed red still on her wrist, and the lace of the short sleeve was torn.

Mario clattered out of the room presently, and came back with a glass of water for her. “I am really sorry,” he whispered as he gave it. “Do stop crying.”

After all they had not meant any harm. She was a little comforted, and the expressed contrition helped her.

“I shall be better soon,” she said gently.

When she got home to the apartment in Via Arco della Ciambella there were lies to be told about the lessons, the pupils, the hours. The fine edge of her exaltation was already blunted, and she sighed at the thought of her morning dreams; sighed and was glad; the first steps had not cost much after all, and she had earned five lire and fifteen soldi.

The lamp was lit in the little sitting-room, and Ser Giulia was there, cutting out a skirt on the [239] table very carefully, in a tense silence that was broken only by the click of the scissors and the rustle of silk.

“I have lost confidence in myself,” she said as she fastened the shining lengths together with pins. “This *is* the right side of the material, isn’t it, my dear? I can’t see.”

“Yes, this is right. Let me stitch the seams for you. Where is Signora Aurelia?”

“She has gone to bed. Her head ached. She—she does not complain, but I think she needs more sun and air than she can get here.”

Olive looked at her quickly. “You ought to go away and rest, both of you.”

“Our brother in Como would be glad to have us with him, but it is impossible at present. I paid our rent a few days ago—three months in advance.”

“I will go to the house-agent in the Piazza di Spagna to-morrow. It should not be difficult to get a tenant, and at the end of the time the furniture could be warehoused, or you could sell it.”

Ser Giulia hesitated. “What would you do then, *figliuola mia*?”

“Oh, I can take care of myself,” the girl said easily.

---

## CHAPTER IV [240]

After the first week Olive went only to Camille’s *atelier*. He was working hard at his “*étude blanche*,” but no one had been allowed to see it, except, of course, M’sieur le Directeur.

“I almost wish I had asked you to come always heavily veiled. The other men are all mad about you, and Gontrand tells me he wants you to give him sittings for the head of an oread, but he cannot have you. You are mine.”

“Is he a lean, black-bearded man?”

“Yes.”

“He spoke to me the other day as I was coming through the garden, and asked me if you were really painting a ‘*jeune fille*’ picture. I said you were painting a picture, and he would probably see it when you had your show in April.”

Camille laughed. “Good child! We must keep up the mystery.” He flung down his brushes. “I cannot work any more to-day. Will you come with me for a drive into the Campagna?”

She hesitated. “I am not sure—”

“Come as my little brother.” He took off his linen painting sleeves, and began to dabble his [241] fingers in a pan of turpentine. “My little brother! Do you know that the Directeur thinks you are charming, and he wonders that I do not love you.”

“I am glad you do not,” she said, colouring. “If you did—”

He was lighting a cigarette. “If I did?” The little momentary flame of the match was reflected in his blue eyes.

“I should go away and not come back again.”

“Well, I do not,” he said heartily. “I care for you as St Francis did for his pet sparrow. So now put your hat on and I will go down and get a *vettura* with a good horse.”

He was a creature of moods, and so young in many ways that he appealed to the girl as Astorre had done, by the queer, pathetic little flaws in his manhood. Some days he worked incessantly from early morning until the light failed at his picture, but there were times when he seemed unable even to look at it. He made several studies in charcoal for “Rosamund.”

“It is an inspiration,” he said excitedly more than once. “The rose of the world that can only be reached by love—or hate—holding the clue.”

He had promised an American who had bought a picture of his the year before that he would do some work for him in Venice in the spring. “Very rash of me,” he said fractiously. “The ‘Jeune [242]
Fille’ would have been quite enough for me to show, and it is dreadful to have to leave it unfinished now.” And when Gontrand tried to persuade him to let him have Olive during his absence he was, as the girl phrased it, quite cross. “I have seen enough of that. Last year in the Salon St Elizabeth of Hungary, and Clytemnestra, and Malesherbe’s *vivandière* were one and the same woman. Besides, oreads are nearly related to Bacchantes, Gontrand, and I am not going to allow my little sewing-girl to be mixed up with people of that sort.”

He made Olive promise not to sit for any of the other men at the Villa Medici.

“I shall work at Varini’s in the evenings,” she said. “And one of the men there wants me to come to his studio in the Via Margutta three mornings a week. He is a Baron von something.”

The Frenchman’s face lightened. “Oh, that German! I know him. I saw a landscape of his once. It looked as if several tubes of paint had got together and burst. What else will you do?”

“Rome, if you will lend me your Bædeker,” she answered. “I shall begin with A and work my way through Beatrice Cenci and the Borgo Nuovo to the Corsini Gallery and the Corso. Some of the letters may be rather dull. I am so glad Apollo comes now.”

He laughed. “M for Michelin. You will be sure to admire me when my turn comes.” [243]

Olive was living alone now in a tall old house in Ripetta. The two kind women who had been her friends had left Rome and gone to stay with their brother at Como. It was evidently the best thing they could do, and the girl had assured them that she was quite well able to look after herself, but they had been only half convinced by her reasoning. She was English and she had done it before. “That is nothing,” Ser Giulia said. “You may catch a ball once, and the second time it may slip through your fingers. And sometimes Life is like the importunate widow and goes on asking until one gives what one should not.” She helped her to find a room, and eked out the furniture from her own little store. “Another saucepan, and a kettle, and a blanket. And if lessons fail you must come to us, *figliuola mia*. My brother’s house is large.”

The girl had answered her with a kiss, but though she loved them she was not altogether sorry to see them go. She could never tell them how she had earned the lire that paid the baker’s bill. The truth would hurt them, and she would not give them a moment’s pain if she could avoid it, but she was not good at lying. Even the very little white ones stuck in her throat, and she was relieved to be no longer under the necessity of uttering them.

The room she had taken was on the sixth floor, and from the one narrow window she could look [244]
across the yellow swirl of Tiber towards Monte Mario. She had set up her household gods. The plaster bust of Dante, and her books, on the rickety wooden table by her bedside, and, such as it was, this place was home.

Camille went by a night train, and Olive began to “see Rome” on the following morning. She took the tram to the Piazza Venezia and walked from thence to the church of Santa Maria Ara Coeli.

The flight of steps to the west door is very long, and she climbed slowly, stopping once or twice to take breath and look back at the crowded roofs and many church domes of Rome, and at the green heights of the Janiculan hill beyond, with the bronze figure of Garibaldi on his horse, dominant, and very clear against the sky.

The cripple at the door lifted the heavy leather curtain for her and she put a soldo into his outstretched hand as she went in. The church seemed very still, very quiet, after the clamour of the streets. The acrid scent of incense was as the breath of spent prayer. Little yellow flames flickered in the shrine lamps before each altar, but it was early yet and for the moment no mass was being said. An old, white-haired monk was sweeping the worn pavement. He was swathed in a blue linen apron, and his rusty brown frock was tucked up about his ankles. A lean black cat [245]
followed him, mewing, and now and then he stopped his work to stroke it. There was a great stack of chairs by the door, and a few were scattered about the aisles and occupied by stray worshippers, women with handkerchiefs tied over their heads in deference to St Paul’s expressed wishes, two or three old men, and some peasants with their market baskets. A be-ribboned nurse carrying a baby had just come in to see the Sacro Bambino, and Olive followed them into the sacristy and saw the child laid down before the bedizened, red-cheeked wooden doll in the glass

case. As they passed out again the monk who was in attendance gave Olive a coloured card with a prayer printed on the back. She heard him asking what was the matter with the little one. The woman lifted the lace veil from the tiny face and showed him the sightless eyes. He crossed himself. "*Poveretto! Dio vi benedica!*"

As Olive left the sacristy a tall man came across the aisle towards her. It was Prince Tor di Rocca.

"This is a great pleasure," he said. "But not to you, I am afraid. You are not glad to see me."

"I am surprised. I—do you often come into churches?"

He laughed. "I sometimes follow women in. I saw you coming up the steps just now. You are right [246]
in supposing that I am not devout. I want to speak to you. Shall we go out?"

She looked for a way of escape but saw none.

"If—very well," she said rather helplessly.

The hunchback woman at the south door watched them expectantly as they came towards her, and she brightened as she saw the man's hand go to his pocket. He threw her a piece of silver as they passed out. He was in a good humour, his fine lips smiling, a glinting zest in his insolent eyes. He thought he understood women, and he had in fact made a one-sided study of the sex. He had seen their ways of loving, he had listened to the beating of their hearts; but of their endurance, their long patience, their daily life he knew nothing. He was like a man who often wears a bunch of violets in his coat until they fade, and yet has never seen, or cared to see them, growing sparsely, small and sweet, half hidden in leaves on a mossy bank by the stream.

Women amused him. He was seldom much moved by them, and he pursued them without haste or flurry, treading delicately like Agag of old. He had little intrigues everywhere, in Florence, in Naples, in Rome. Young married women, girls walking demurely with their mothers. He liked to know that it was he who brought the colour to their cheeks and that their eyes sought him among [247]
the crowd of men standing outside Aragno's in the Corso or on the steps of the club in the Via Tornabuoni. Very often the affair would be one of the eyes only, but sometimes it went farther. Filippo's procedure varied. Sometimes he put advertisements in the personal column of the Popolo Romano, and sometimes he wrote notes. It was always very interesting while it lasted. Occasionally affairs overlapped, as when an appeal to F. to meet Norina once more in the Borghese appeared in print above F.'s request that the signorina in the pink hat would write to him at the Poste Restante.

Olive had nearly yielded to him in Florence, and then she had run away, she had sought safety in flight. Evidently then his battle had been nearly won. But she had reassembled her forces, and he saw that it would be all to fight over again, and that the issue was doubtful.

As they came into the little square piazza of the Capitol she turned to him. "What have you to say? I—I am in a hurry."

"I am sorry for that, but if you are going anywhere I can walk with you, or we can take a *vettura* and drive together."

She looked past him at the green shining figure of Marcus Aurelius on his horse riding between her and the sun, and said nothing.

"I shall enjoy being with you even if you are inclined to be silent. You are so good to look at." [248]

His brazen stare gave point to his words. Her face was no longer childish in its charm. It had lost the first roundness of youth, but had gained in expression. A soul seemed to be shining through the veil of flesh—white and rose-red flesh, divinely gilt with freckles—and fluttering in the troubled depths of her blue eyes. The nun-like simplicity of her grey dress pleased him: it did not detract from her; it left the eyes free to return to her face, to dwell upon her lips.

"Something has happened," he said. "There is another man. Are you married?"

"No."

"I only came to Rome yesterday. Strange that we should meet so soon. It seems that there is a Destiny that shapes our ends after all."

"You do not believe in free will?"

He shrugged his shoulders. "I do not think about such things."

"Well," she said impatiently. "Is that all you have to say? I suppose the Marchesa and Mamie are here too."

He hesitated and seemed to lose some of his assurance. "No, we quarrelled. The girl is insupportable. She is engaged now to a lord of sorts, an Englishman, and they are still in Cairo."

"So you have lost her too."

"It was your fault that Edna gave me up. You owe me something for that. And you behaved badly [249]
to me again—afterwards."

"I did not."

He laughed enjoyingly. “I trusted you and you took advantage of a truce to run away.”

She moved away from him, but he followed her and kept at her side.

“I never asked you to trust me. I asked you to come the next day for an answer. You came and you had it.”

“I came and I had it,” he repeated. “Did the old woman give you my message?”

“That we should meet again?”

“That was not all. I said you would come to me one day sooner or later.”

They had paused at the top of the steps that lead down from the Capitol into the streets and are guarded by the gigantic figures of Castor and Pollux, great masses of discoloured marble set on pedestals on either side. It was twelve o’clock, and a black stream of hungry, desk-weary men poured out of the Capitoline offices. Many turned to look at the English girl as they hurried by, and one passing close to her muttered “bella” in her ear. She drew back as though she had been stung. Filippo laughed again.

“I only ask to be let alone,” she said. “Can’t you understand that you remind me of things I want [250] to forget. I am ashamed, oh, can’t you understand!”

She left him and went to stand on the outskirts of the crowd that had collected in front of the cage in which the wolves are kept. Evidently she hoped that he would go on, but he meant to disappoint her, and when she went down the steps he was close beside her.

“Why are you so unkind to me?” he said, and as they crossed the road he held her arm.

She wrenched herself away, went up to the *carabiniere*, who stood at the corner, and spoke to him. The man smiled tolerantly as he glanced from her to Filippo. “Signorina, I cannot help you.”

She passed on down the street, knowing that she was being followed, crossed the Corso Vittorio Emanuele and took a tram in the Piazza della Minerva. Tor di Rocca got in too and sat down opposite to her. The conductor turned to him first, and when she proffered her four soldi she found that he had paid for both. Her hand shook as she put the money back in her purse, and her colour rose. Filippo, quite at his ease, leisurely, openly observant of her, whistled “Lucia” softly to himself. Roses, roses all the way, and all for him, he thought amusedly. And yet she bore the ordeal well, betraying no restlessness, keeping her eyes unswervingly fixed on the two lions of [251] the advertisement of Chinina Migone pasted on the glass over his head. At the Ripetta bridge she got out. He followed, saw her go into a house farther down the street, and paused on the threshold to take the number before he went up the stairs after her. She heard him coming. He turned the handle of the door, but she had locked it and it held fast. He knocked once and called to her. Evidently he was not sure of her being within. There was another room on the same landing, and after a while he tried that.

“Are you in there? *Carissima*, you are wasting time. To-day or to-morrow, sooner or later. Why not to-day, and soon?”

A silence ensued. The girl had taken off her hat and thrown it down upon the table. She stood very still in the middle of the room listening, waiting for him to go away again. Her breath came quickly, and little pearls of sweat broke out upon her forehead. His persistence frightened her.

He waited for an answer, and receiving none, added, “Well, I will come again,” and so went away.

She stayed in until it was time to go to Varini’s. It was not far, but she was flushed and panting with the haste that she had made as she put on the faded blue silk dress that had been laid out ready for her on the one broken chair in the dressing-room. Rosina came in to her presently from [252] the professor’s studio. She wore a man’s tweed coat and a striped blanket wrapped about her, and she was smoking a cigarette.

“So you have come back to work here. Your signorino at the Villa Medici is away?”

“Only for a few days. He will not be gone long. The picture is not finished. How is Pasquina?”

Rosina had come over to her and was fastening the hooks of her bodice. “She is very well. How pretty you are.” She rearranged the laces at the girl’s breast and caught up a torn piece of the silk with a pin. “That is better. Have you been running? You seem hot.”

“Oh, Rosina, I have been frightened. A man followed me. I shall be afraid to go home to-night.”

The yellow-haired Trasteverina looked at her shrewdly. “He knows where you live? Have you only seen him once?”

“He—he came and tried my door. I am afraid of him.”

Rosina nodded. “*Si capisce!* I will take care of you. I have met so many *mascalzoni* in twenty years that I have grown used to them. I will come home with you, and if any man so much as looks at us I will scratch his eyes out.”

Through the thin partition wall they heard the professor calling for his model. “I must go,” she [253] said hurriedly, but as she passed out Olive caught at a fold of the enveloping blanket.

“Come here, I want you.” She flung her arms about the other girl’s neck and kissed her. “You are good! You are good!”

She went into the class room and climbed the throne as the men came clattering in to take their places. The professor posed her.

“So you have come back to us. Do not let them spoil you at the Villa Medici—your head a little higher—so.”

The first drawing in of the figure is not a thing to be taken lightly, and the silence was seldom broken at Varini’s on Monday evenings. The two boys, however, found it hard to repress the natural loquacity of their extreme youth.

“*Al lavoro*, Mario! What are you whispering about? Cesare, *zitto*!” Bembi stared at them. “Their chins are disappearing,” he said. “See their collars. Every day an inch higher. *Dio mio!* Is that the way to please women? I wear a flannel shirt and my neck is as bare as a plucked chicken, and yet I—” he stopped short.

Mario laughed. “Women are strange,” he admitted.

“Mad!” cried Cesare, and then as Bembi still smirked ineffably he appealed to Olive. “Do you admire fowls wrapped in flannel or *in arrosto*?”

When she came out she found Rosina waiting for her in the courtyard, a grey shadow with [254]
smooth fair hair shining in the moonlight. “The professor let me go at eight so I dressed and came out here,” she explained. “The dressing-room is full of dust and spider’s webs. I told the porter the other day that he ought to sweep it, but he only laughed at me and said Domeniddio made spiders long before he took a rib out of Adam’s side to whip a naughty world.”

“Who is the man?” she asked presently as they walked along together. “Do I know him?”

“I do not think so. He is not an artist.”

Rosina laid a hand upon her arm. “Is that he?” she said.

They had passed through one of the narrow streets that lead from the Corso towards the river and were come into the Ripetta.

A tall man was walking slowly along on the other side of the road. He did not seem to have noticed the two girls, and yet as he stopped to light a cigarette he was looking towards them. A tram came clanging up, the overhead wires emitting strange noises peculiar to themselves, the gong ringing sharply. Olive glanced up at the red painted triangle fixed to the lamp-post at the corner. “It will stop here. Quick! while it is between us. Perhaps he has not seen—”

They ran to her door and up the stairs together. “It has only just gone on,” cried Rosina. “Have [255]
you got your key?”

She stayed on the landing while Olive went into the room and lit her candle. There was no sound in the house at all, no step upon the stair. As she peered down over the banisters into the darkness below she listened intently. The rustling of her skirt sounded loud in the stillness, but there was nothing else.

“He did not see us,” she said. “I shall go now. Lock your door. *Felice notte, piccina.*”

---

## CHAPTER V [256]

Camille, loitering on the terrace of the old garden of the Villa Medici, was quick to hear the creaking of the iron gate upon its hinges. His pale face brightened as he threw away his cigarette and he went down the path between the ilex trees to meet his model.

“You have come. Oh, I seem to have been years away.”

They went up the hill together. It was early yet, and the city was veiled in fine mist through which the river gleamed here and there with a sharpness of steel. The dome of St Peter’s was still dark against the greenish pallor of the morning sky.

“I am glad to be in Rome again. Venice is beautiful, but it does not inspire me. It has no associations for me. What do I care for the Doges, or for Titian’s fat, golden-haired women with their sore eyes—Caterina Cornaro and the rest. Rome is a crystal in which I seem to see faces of dear women, women who lived and loved and saw the sun set behind that rampart of low hills—Virginia, the Greek slave Acte, Agnes, Cecilia, who sang as she lay dying in her house over there in the Trasteverine quarter. Ah, I shall go away and have the nostalgia of Rome to the end of my [257]
life.” He paused to light another cigarette. “Come and look at the picture. I have not dared to see it again myself since I came back last night.”

The door of his *atelier* was open; he clattered up the steep wooden stairs and she followed him. The canvas was set up on an easel facing the great north light. Camille went up to it and then backed away.

“Well?”

He was smiling. “It is good,” he said. “I shall work on it to-day and to-morrow. Get ready now while I prepare my palette.”

He looked at her critically as she took her place. The change in her was indefinable, but he was aware of it. She seemed to be listening.

“Do you feel a draught from the door?” he asked presently.

“No, but I should like it shut.”

“Nerves. You need a tonic and probably a change of air and scene. There is nothing the matter?”

She shook her head. Camille was kind, but he could not help her. He could not make the earth open and swallow Tor di Rocca, and sometimes she felt that nothing less than that would satisfy her, and that such a summary ending would contribute greatly to her peace of mind.

She had not seen the Prince for two days and she was beginning to hope that he had gone away, [258] but she was not yet able to feel free of him. Rosina had come home with her every night from Varini’s. Once he had followed them, and twice he had come up the stairs and knocked at the door. There had been hours when she had been safe from him, but she had not known them, and the strain, the constant pricking fear of him, was telling upon her. Every day youth and strength and hope seemed to be slipping away and leaving her less able to do and to endure. She dared not look forward, as Camille did, to the end of life. He would die in his bed, full of years and honour, a great artist, a master, the president of many societies, but she—

Sometimes, as she stood facing the semi-circle of men at Varini’s, and listened to the busy scratching of charcoal on paper, to Bembi’s heavy breathing, and to the ticking of the clock, she wondered if she had done wrong in taking this way of bread earning. Certainly there could be no turning back. The step, once taken, was irrevocable. If artists employed her she would go on, but she could get no other work if this failed. If this failed there must be another struggle between flesh and spirit, and this time it would be decisive—one or other must prevail. Though she dreaded it she knew it was inevitable.

Meanwhile Camille stood in need of her ministrations. He had arranged to show his work on the [259] fifteenth of April, and now he seemed to regard that date as thrice accursed. Often when she came in the morning she would find him prowling restlessly to and fro, or sitting with his head in his hands staring gloomily at the parquet flooring and sighing like a furnace.

“I hate having to invite people who do not know anything, who cannot tell an etching from an oil,” he said irritably. “I cannot suffer their ridiculous comments gladly. I would rather have six teeth pulled out than hear my Aholibah called pretty. *Pretty!*”

“They cannot say anything wrong about the picture of me,” she said. “It is splendid. M’sieur le Directeur says so, and I am sure it is. And your Venice sketches look so well on the screen.”

“You must be there,” he moaned. “If you are not there I shall burst into tears and run away.” Then he laughed. “I am always like this. You should see me in Paris on the eve of the opening of the Salon. A pitiable wreck! I had no angel to console me there.”

He kissed her hands with unusual fervour.

The girl had not really meant to come at first, but she yielded to his persuasions. “I will look after the food and drink then,” she said, and she spent herself on the decoration of the tea-table. They went to Aragno’s together in the morning to get cakes and bonbons.

“What flowers?” [260]

She chose mimosa, and he bought a great mass of the fragrant golden boughs, and a bunch of violets for her.

Camille knew a good many people in Rome, and all those he had asked came. The Prix de Rome men were the first arrivals. They came in a body, and on the stroke of the hour named on the invitation cards. Camille watched their faces eagerly as they crowded in and came to a stand before his picture; they knew, and if they approved he cared little for the verdict of all Rome.

Gontrand was the first to break rather a long silence.

“Delicious!” he cried. “It is a triumph.”

Camille flushed with pleasure as the others echoed him.

“The scheme of whites,” “The fine quality,” “So pure.”

One after the other they went across the room to talk to the model, who stood by the tea-table waiting to serve them.

“You are wonderful, mademoiselle. If only you would sit for me I might hope to achieve something too.”

“When M’sieur Michelin has done with me,” she said. “You like the picture?”

“It is adorable—as you are.”

Other people were coming now. Camille stayed by the door to receive them while his friend Gontrand showed the drawings in the portfolio, explained the Campagna sketches, and handed [261] plates of cake and sweets. When Olive made fresh tea he brought her more sliced lemons from the lumber room, where Rosina was washing the cups.

“I am useful but not disinterested. Persuade Camille to let you sit for me.”

“But you will not be here in the summer,” she said wistfully.

“Coffee, madame? These cakes are not very sweet. Yes, I was M’sieur Michelin’s model. Yes, it is a beautiful picture.”

The crowd thinned towards six o’clock, and there was no one now at the far end of the room but a man who seemed to be looking at the sketches on the screen. Olive thought she might take a cup of tea herself, and she was pouring it out when he turned and came towards her. It was Tor di Rocca.

“Ah,” he said smilingly, “the girl in Michelin’s picture reminded me of you, but I did not realise that you were indeed the ‘Jeune Fille.’ I have been away from Rome these last few days. Have you missed me?”

His hot brown eyes lingered over her.

“Don’t.”

“I should like a cup of coffee.”

Her hand shook so as she gave it to him that much was spilled on the floor. She had pitied him once; he remembered that as he saw how she shrank from him. “Michelin has been more [262] fortunate than I have,” he said deliberately.

“I beg your pardon.”

“You seem to be at home here.”

“I suppose you must follow the bent of your mind.”

“I suppose I must,” he agreed as he stood aside to let her pass. She had defied him that night in Florence. “Never!” she had said. And now he saw that she smiled at Camille as she went by him into the further room, and the old bad blood stirred in him and he ached with a fierce jealousy.

She had denied him. “Never!” she had said.

As he joined the group of men by the door Gontrand turned to him. “Ah, Prince, have you heard that Michelin has already sold his picture?”

“I am not surprised,” the Italian answered suavely. “If I was rich—but I am not. Who is the happy man?”

“That stout grey-haired American who left half an hour since. Did you notice him? He is Vandervelde, the great millionaire art collector.”

“May one ask the price?”

“Eight thousand francs,” answered Camille. He looked tired, but his blue eyes were very bright. “I am glad, and yet I shall be sorry to part with it.”

“You will still have the charming original,” the Prince said not quite pleasantly.

There was a sudden silence. The men all waited for Camille’s answer. Beyond, in the next room, [263] they heard the two girls splashing the water, clattering the cups and plates.

The young Frenchman paused in the act of striking a match. He looked surprised. “But this is the original. I have made no copy.”

“I meant—” The Prince stopped short. After all, he thought, he goes well who goes slowly.

Camille was waiting. “You meant?”

Tor di Rocca had had time to think. “Nothing,” he said sweetly.

Silence was again ensuing but Gontrand flung himself into the breach.

“The Duchess said she wanted her daughter’s portrait painted.”

“She said the same to me.”

“Are you going to do it?”

Camille suppressed a yawn. “I don’t know. *Qui vivra verra.*”

He was glad when they were all gone, Gontrand and Tor di Rocca and the rest, and he could stretch himself and sigh, and sing at the top of his voice:

“‘Nicholas, je vais me pendre
Qu’est-ce que tu vas dire de cela?

Si vous vous pendez ou v'vous pendez pas
Ça m'est ben egal, Mam'zelle.
Si vous vous pendez ou v'vous pendez pas
Oh, laissez moi planter mes chous!'"

When Olive came out of the inner room presently he told her that he had sold the "Jeune Fille." [264]
"The Duchess has nearly commissioned me to paint her Mélanie. It went off well, don't you think so? Come at nine to-morrow."

"Yes, if you want me. Good-night, M'sieur Camille," she said. "Are you coming, Rosina?"

"Why do you wait for her?" he asked curiously. "I should not have thought you had much in common."

"She is my friend. She knows I do not care to be alone."

---

## CHAPTER VI [265]

When Olive came to the *atelier* on the following morning Camille was not there, but the door was open and he had left a note on the table for her.

> "I have had a letter from the Duchess. She is leaving Rome to-day but she wants to see me before she goes. It must be about her daughter's portrait. I must go to her hotel, but I shall drive both ways and be back in half an hour. Wait for me.—C. M."

Olive took off her hat and coat as usual behind the screen. She was choosing a book from the tattered row of old favourites on the shelf when she heard a step outside. She listened, thinking that it was Camille, and fearing that the commission had not been given him. It was not like him to be so silent.

"I thought you would be singing—" she stopped short.

Filippo came on into the room.

"M'sieur Michelin is out," she said.

"So the porter told me. You do not think I want to see him. Will you come with me to Albano to- [266]
day?"

She shook her head.

"To-morrow, then. Why not?"

"I have my work."

"Your work! I see you believe you can do without me now. How long do you think you will be able to earn money in this way? All these men will be leaving Rome soon. The schools will be closed until next October. You will have to choose between the devil and the deep sea—"

"What is the good of talking about it?" she said wearily. "I know I have nothing to look forward to. I know that. Please go away."

"Do you know that you have cost me more than any other woman I have ever met? You injured me; will you make no amends?"

She laughed. "So you are the victim."

"Yes," he said passionately, "I told you before that I suffered, and you believed me then. Is it my fault that I am made like this? Since that night in Florence when I held you in my arms I have had no peace."

"You behaved very badly. I can't think why I let myself be sorry for you."

"Badly! Some men would, but I loved you even then."

She looked wistfully towards the door. "I wish you would go. There are so many other women."

"I love you, I want you," he answered, and he caught her in his arms and held her in spite of her [267]
struggles. "I have you!" He forced her head down upon his breast and kissed her mouth. She thought the hateful pressure of his lips, the hateful fire of his eyes would kill her, and when, at last, she wrenched herself away she screamed with the despairing violence of some trapped, wild thing.

"Camille! Camille!"

It seemed to her that if he did not hear her this must be the end of all, and she suffered an agony

of terror. She thanked God as the door below was flung to and he came running up the stairs.

The Prince let her go and half turned to meet him, but Camille was not inclined to parley. He struck, and struck hard. Filippo slipped on the polished floor, tried to recover himself, and fell heavily at the girl's feet.

He got up at once, and the two men stood glaring at each other. Olive looked from one to the other. "It was nothing. I am sorry," she said breathlessly. "He was trying to—I was frightened. It was nothing, really, but—but I am glad you came."

"So am I," the Frenchman said grimly. His blue eyes were grown grey as steel. "I am waiting, Prince."

A little blood had sprung from Filippo's cut lip and run down his chin. He wiped it with his handkerchief and looked thoughtfully at the stain on the white linen before he spoke. [268]

"Who is your friend?"

"René Gontrand."

"No, no!" cried the girl. "Filippo, it was your fault. Can't you be sorry and forget? Camille!"

"Hush, child," he said, "you do not understand."

Tor di Rocca was looking at her now with the old insolent smile in his red-brown eyes. "Ah, you said 'Never!' but presently you will come."

So he left them.

Olive expected to be "poored," but Camille, as it seemed, deliberately took no notice of her. She watched him picking a stick of charcoal from the accumulation of odd brushes, pens and pencils on the table.

"What a handsome devil it is. Lean, lithe and brown. He should go naked as a faun; such things roamed about the primeval woods seeking what they might devour. I wish I had asked him to sit for me."

He went to his easel and began to sketch a head on the canvas he had prepared for the Rosamund. "He has the short Neronic upper lip," he murmured.

Olive lost patience. "I wonder you had the heart to risk spoiling its contour," she said resentfully.

"With my fist, you mean?"

"I—I am very sorry—" she began. He saw that she was crying, and he was perplexed, not quite [269] understanding what she wanted of him.

"What am I to say to you?" He came over and sat down beside her, and she let him hold her hand. "I know so little—not even your name. I have asked no questions, but of course I saw— Why do you not go back to your friends?"

She dried her eyes. "I have cousins in Milan, but I have lost their address, and they would not be able to help me. I have burnt my boats. I used to give lessons, but it was not easy to find pupils, and then I met Rosina. I cannot go back to being a governess after being a model. I have done no wrong, but no one would have me if they knew. You see one has to go on—"

"Have you known Tor di Rocca long? He was here last winter. He has a villa somewhere outside Rome. I think it belonged to his mother. She was an Orsini."

"You are not going to fight him?"

Outside, in the ilex wood, birds were calling to one another. The sun gilded the green of the gnarled old trees; it had rained in the night, and the garden was sweet with the scent of moist earth. The young man sighed. He had meant to take his "little brother" into the Campagna this April day to see the spring pageant of the skies, to hear the singing of larks high up at heaven's [270] gate, the tinkling of sheep bells, the gurgling of water springs half hidden in the green lush grass that grows in the shadow of the ruined Claudian aqueducts.

"Camille, answer me."

He got up and went back to his easel. "You must run away now," he said. "I can't work this morning. I think I shall go to Naples for a few days, but I will let you know when I return. We must get on with the 'Rosamund.'"

She went obediently to put on her hat, but the face she saw reflected in the little hanging mirror was pale and troubled. He came with her to the door, and when she gave him her hand he bent to kiss it. Her eyes filled again with tears. He will be killed, she thought, and for me.

"Don't fight! For my sake, don't. I shall begin to think that I am a creature of ill-omen. They say some women are like that; they have the *mal occhio*; they give sorrow—"

"That is absurd," he said roughly, and then, in a changed voice, "Good-bye, child."

## CHAPTER VII

[271]

Olive walked home to Ripetta. She felt tired and shaken, and unhappily conscious of some effort that must be made presently.

“He will be killed—and for me.” “For me.” “For me.” She heard that echo of her thought through all the clamour of the streets, the shrill cries, the clatter of hoofs, the rattling of wheels over the cobble stones. She heard it as she climbed the stairs to her room. When she had taken off her hat and coat she poured some eau-de-cologne with water into a cup and drank it—not this time to Italy or the joy of life. She lay down on her bed and stayed there for a while, not resting, but thinking or trying to think.

Was she really a sort of number thirteen, a grain of spilt salt, ill-omened, disastrous? Camille would not think so; but it seemed to her that she had never been able to make anyone happy, and that there must be some taint in her therefore, some flaw in her nature.

Now, here, at last, was a thing well worth doing. She must risk her soul, lose it, perhaps, or rather, exchange it for a man’s life. She had hoarded it hitherto, had been miserly, selfish, seeking to save the poor thing as though it were a pearl of price. Now she saw herself as the [272] veriest rag of flesh parading virtue, useless, comfortless, helpless, clinging to her code, and justifying all the trouble she gave to others by a reference to the impalpable, elusive and possible non-existent immortal and inner self she had held so dear. She was ashamed. Ah, now at last she would give ungrudgingly. Her feet should not falter, nor her eyes be dimmed by any shadow of fear or of regret, though she went by perilous ways to an almost certain end.

Soon after noon she got up and prepared to face the world again, and towards three o’clock she returned to the Villa Medici. She had to ring the porter’s bell as the garden gate was shut, and the old man came grumblingly as usual.

“Monsieur Michelin will see no one. Did he not tell you so this morning?”

“But I have come for Monsieur Gontrand,” she said.

She hoped now above all things to find the black Gascon alone in his *atelier* near the Belvedere. The first move depended upon him, and there was no time to spare. She determined to await his return in the wood if he were out, but there was no need. He opened his door at once in answer to her knocking.

“I have come—may I speak to you for a moment?” she began rather confusedly. He looked tired [273] and worried, and was so evidently alarmed at the sight of her, and afraid of what she was going to say next, that she could hardly help smiling. “I want to ask you two questions. I hope you will answer them.”

“I should be glad to please you, mademoiselle, but—”

She hurried on. “First, when are they going to fight? Oh, tell me, tell me! I know you were to be with him. I know you are his friend. Be mine too! What harm can it do? I swear I will keep it secret.”

“Ah, well, if you promise that,” he said. “It is to be to-morrow afternoon.”

“Where?”

He shook his head. “I really cannot tell you that.”

“Well, the hour is fixed. It will not be changed?”

“No, the Prince preferred the early morning, but Michelin has an appointment he must keep with Vandervelde at noon.”

“Nothing will persuade him to alter it then?” she insisted.

“Nothing.”

“That is well,” she said sighing. “Good-bye, M’sieur Gontrand. You—you will do your best for Camille.”

“You may rely on me,” he answered.

She went down the steps of Trinità del Monte, and across the Piazza di Spagna to the English book-shop at the corner, where she bought a *Roman Herald*. Three minutes study of the visitors’ [274] list sufficed to inform her that the Prince was staying at the Hotel de Russie close by. The afternoon was waning, and already the narrow streets of the lower town were in shadow; soon the shops would be lit up and gay with the gleam of marbles, the glimmer of Roman pearls and silks, and the green, grotesque bronzes that strangers buy.

Olive walked down the Via Babuino past the ugly English church, crossed the road, and entered the hall of the hotel in the wake of a party of Americans. They went on towards the lift and left her uncertain which way to turn, so she appealed to the gold-laced, gigantic, and rather awful porter.

“Prince Tor di Rocca?”

He softened at her mention of the illustrious name.

“If you will go into the lounge there I will send to see if the Prince is in. What name shall I say?”

“Miss Agar. I have no card with me.”

She chose a window-seat near a writing-table at the far end of the room, and there Filippo found her when he came in five minutes later. He was prepared for anything but the smile in the blue eyes lifted to his, and he paled as he took the hand she gave and raised it to his lips.

“Ah,” he said fervently, “if you were always kind.” [275]

“You would be good?”

“Yes.”

“For a week, or a month? But you need not answer me. Filippo, I should like some tea.”

“Of course,” he said eagerly. “Forgive me,” and he hurried away to order it.

When he returned his dark face was radiant. “Do you know that is the second time you have called me by my name? You said Filippo this morning. Ah, I heard you, and I have thought of it since.”

The girl hardened her heart. She realised—she had always realised that this man was dangerous. A fire consumed him. It was a fire that blazed up to destroy, no pleasant light and warmth upon the hearth of a good life, but women were apt to flutter, moth-like, into the flame of it nevertheless.

He sat down beside her and took her hand in his.

“I know I was violent this morning; I could not help myself. I am a Tor di Rocca. It would be so easy for you to make me happy—”

She listened quietly.

A waiter brought the tea and set it on a little table between them.

“You had coffee yesterday,” she said. “It seems years ago.”

“I have forgotten yesterday, *Incipit vita nuova*! Do you remember I came to you dressed in Dante’s red *lucco*?” [276]

“Yes, but you are not a bit like him.”

She came to the point presently. “Filippo, you say you want me?”

“More than anything in this world.”

Her eyes met his and held them. “Well, if you will get out of fighting M’sieur Michelin I will come to you—meet you—anywhere and at any hour after noon to-morrow.”

“Ah, you make conditions.”

“Of course.”

“How can I get out of fighting him? The man struck me, insulted me.”

“Yes,” she said, “and you know why!”

“I have asked your pardon for that,” he said with an effort that brought the colour into his face.

“Yes, but that is not enough. I don’t choose that this unpleasantness should go any further. Write a letter to him now—we will concoct it together—and—and—I will be nice to you.”

She smiled at him, and there was no shadow of fear or of regret in the blue eyes that looked towards the almost certain end.

“Well, I must be let down easily,” he said unwillingly. “I am not going to lick his boots.”

They sat down at the writing-table together, and she began to dictate. “Just scribble this, and if it does you can make a fair copy afterwards. [277]

“‘Dear Monsieur Michelin,—On reflection I understand that your conduct this morning was justifiable from your point of view, and I withdraw—’”

Filippo laid down the pen. “I shall not say that.”

“Begin again then,” she said patiently.

“‘I have been asked to write to you by a third person whom I wish to please. She tells me that this morning’s unpleasantness resulted from a misunderstanding. She says she has deceived you, and she hopes that you will forgive her. I suppose from what she has said that your hasty action was excusable, as you thought her other than she is, and I think that you may now regret it and agree with me that this need go no farther—’”

“This is better for me,” he said.

“Yes.” She took the pen from him and wrote under his signature: “You will be sorry to know that your child is a liar. Try to forget her existence.”

“You can send it now by someone who must wait for an answer,” she explained. “I shall stay here until it comes.”

“Very well,” he said sulkily, and he went out into the hall to confer with the porter. “An important letter, *Eccellenza*? A *vetturino* will take it for you—”

Olive heard the opening and shutting of doors, the shrill whistle answered by harsh, raucous cries, the rattling of wheels. Filippo came back to her. [278]

“I have done my part.” Then, looking at her closely, he saw that she was very pale. “Is all you have implied and I have written true?”

“No.”

“You must love him very much.”

“I? Not at all, as you understand love.”

The ensuing half-hour seemed long to the girl; Filippo talked desultorily, but there were intervals of silence. She was too tired to attempt to answer him, and, besides, his evident restlessness, his inattention, afforded her some acrid amusement. He was like a boy, eager in pursuit of the bird in the bush, heedless of the poor thing fluttering, dying in his hand. It was now near the dinner-hour, and people were coming into the lounge to await the sounding of the gong; from where Olive sat she could see all the entrances and exits—as in a glass darkly—in the clouded surface of a mirror that hung on the wall and reflected the white gleam of shirt fronts, the shimmer of silks, and she was quick to note that Filippo was interested in what she saw as a pink blur.

His love was as fully winged for flight as any Beast of the book of Revelations; it was swift as a sword to pierce and be withdrawn. He could not be altogether loyal for a day. Olive’s heart was filled with pity for the women who had cared. [279]

When, at last, the answer to the letter came, the Prince gave it to her to read. It was very short, a mere scrawl of scarlet ink on the brown, rough-edged paper that was one of Camille’s affectations.

“My zeal was evidently misplaced and I regret its excess.”

Olive was speechless; her eyes were dimmed, her throat ached with tears. How easily he believed the worst—this man who had been her friend. She rose to go, but Filippo laid a detaining hand upon her arm.

“To-morrow.” He had already told her where and when to meet him, and had given her two keys.

“Are you sure you want me?” she said hurriedly. “There are so many women in your life. You remind me of the South American Republic that made—and shot—seventeen presidents in six months.”

He laughed. “Do I? You remind me of an eel, or a little grey mouse trying to get out of a trap. There is no way out, my dear, unless, of course, you want me to kill your Frenchman. I am a good shot.”

“I will come.”

She looked for pink as she went out of the room, and saw a very pretty woman in rose-coloured tulle sitting alone and near the door. [280]

She had given ungrudgingly, unfaltering, and there was no shadow of regret in her eyes; it was nothing to her that he should care for this other little body, for bare white shoulders and a fluff of yellow hair. He had never been more to her than a means to an end, and he was to be that now.

She took a tram from the Piazza del Popolo to the Rotonda. There was a large ironmonger’s shop at the corner; she remembered having noticed it before. She went in and asked to look at some of the pistols they had in the window. Several were brought out for her to see, and she chose a small one. The young man who served her showed her how to load it and pull the trigger. He wrapped it in brown paper and made a loop in the string for her to carry it by. She thanked him.

The bells of all the churches were ringing the Ave Maria when she left the Hotel de Russie an hour ago, and it was dark when she reached her own room. The stars were bright, shining through a rift of clouds that hid the crescent moon. Olive laid the awkwardly-shaped parcel she carried down upon the table while she lit her candle. Then she got her scissors and cut the string. This was the key of a door through which she must pass. Death was the way out. [281]

The little flame of the candle gleamed on the polished steel. It was almost a pretty thing, so smooth and shining. It was well worth the money she had paid for it; it was going to be useful, indispensable to-morrow.

Suddenly, in spite of herself, she began to think of her grave. It would be dug soon. She would be brought to it in a black covered cart. No prayers would be said, and there would be no sound at

all but that of the earth falling upon the coffin.

She sprang up, her face chalk white, her eyes wide and dark with terror. She was afraid, horribly afraid of this lonely and violent end. Jean would never know that she died rather than let another man—Jean would never know—Jean—

“I can’t! I can’t!” she said aloud piteously.

She was trembling so that she had to cling to the banisters as she went down the stairs to save herself from falling. There was a post-office at the corner. She went in and explained that she wanted to send a telegram. The young woman behind the counter glanced at the clock.

“Where to? You have half an hour.”

“To Florence.” She wrote it and gave it in.

> “To Jean Avenel, Villa Fiorelli, Settignano, Florence. [282]
>
> “If you would help me come if you can to the Villino Bella Vista at Albano to-morrow soon after noon; watch for me and follow me in. I know it may not be possible, but the danger is real to me and I want you so much. In any case remember that my heart was yours only.—Olive.”

---

## CHAPTER VIII [283]

Jean sat leaning forward that he might see the road. The night was dark, starless, and very wet, and he and the chauffeur were all streaming with rain and splashed with liquid mud that spattered up from the car wheels. Now and again they rattled over the rough cobble stones of a village street, but the way for the most part lay through deep woods and by mountain gorges. The roar of Arno in flood, swollen with melted snows, and hurrying on its way to the sea, was with them for a while, but other sounds there were none save the rustling of leaves in the coverts, the moaning of wind in the tree-tops, the drip-drip of the rain, and the steady throbbing of the car.

When the darkness lightened to the grey glimmer of a cheerless dawn Jean changed places with the chauffeur; Vincenzo was a careful driver, and he dared not trust his own impatience any longer. His hands were numbed with cold, and now he took off his gloves to chafe them, but first he felt in his inner pocket for the flimsy sheets of paper that lay there safe against his heart.

He had been sitting alone at the piano in the music-room, not playing, but softly touching the keys and dreaming in the dark, when Hilaire came in to him. [284]

“You need not write to her after all. She has sent for you. Hear what she says.” He stood in the doorway to read the message by the light that filtered in from the hall. Jean listened carefully.

“The car—I must tell Vincenzo.” The lines of the strong, lean face seemed to have softened, and the brown eyes were very bright. His brother smiled as he laid a kindly hand upon his arm. “The car will be round soon. I have sent word, and you have plenty of time. Assure Olive of my brotherly regard, and tell her that my books are still waiting to be catalogued. If she will come here for a while she will be doing a kindness to a lonely man.”

“I wonder what she is frightened of,” Jean said thoughtfully, and frowning a little. “She says ‘was yours’ too; I don’t like that.”

“Well, you must do your best for her,” Hilaire answered in his most matter-of-fact tone. “Be prepared.”

Jean agreed, and when he went to get ready he transferred a pistol from a drawer of the bureau to his coat pocket. “I shall bring her back with me if I can. Good-bye.”

The sun shone for a few minutes after its rising through a rift in the clouds, but soon went in again; the rain still poured down, and the distance was hidden in mist that clung to the hillsides and filled each ravine and cranny in the rocks. They were near Orvieto when the car broke down; Vincenzo was out on the road at once, but his master sat quite still. He could not endure the thought of any delay. [285]

“What is it? Will it take long?” He had forced himself to wait a minute before he asked the question, but still his lips felt stiff, and all the colour had gone out of them.

The man reassured him. “It is nothing.”

Jean went to help him, and soon they were able to go on again.

They came presently to the fen lands—the Campagna that so greatly needs the magic and glamour of the Roman sunshine, the vault of the blue sky above, and the sound of larks singing to adorn it. It seemed a desolate and dreary waste, wind-swept, and shivering under the lash of the rain on such a morning as this, and the car was a very small thing moving in that apparently

illimitable plain along a road that might be endless. Jean saw a herd of the wild, black buffaloes standing in a pool at the foot of a broken arch of the Claudian aqueduct, and now and again he caught a glimpse of fragments of masonry, or a ruined tower, ancient stronghold of one or other [286] of the robber barons who preyed on Rome-ward pilgrims in the age of faith and rapine.

They reached Albano soon after eleven o'clock, and Jean left his man in the car while he went in to the Ristorante of the Albergo della Posta. He ordered a cup of coffee, and sat down at one of the little marble tables near the door to drink it. There was no one else in the place at the moment.

"Can you tell me the way to the Villino Bella Vista?"

The waiter looked at him curiously. "It is down in the olive woods and quite near the lake, and you must go to it by a lane from the Galleria di Sopra, the upper road to Castel Gandolfo." After a momentary hesitation he added, "*Scusi!* But are you thinking of taking it, signore?"

Jean started. It had not occurred to him that the house might be empty. "I don't know," he answered cautiously. "Has it been to let long?"

"Oh, yes," the man said. "The Princess Tor di Rocca spent her last years there, alone, and after her death the agent in Rome found tenants. But lately no one has come to it, even to see." He lowered his voice. "The place has a bad name hereabouts. The *contadini*—rough, ignorant folk, signore—say she still walks in the garden at moonrise, waiting for the husband and son who never came; and the women who go to wash their linen in the lake will not come back that way at [287] night for fear of seeing her dead eyes peering at them through the bars of the gate."

"Ah, that is very interesting," Jean said appreciatively. He finished his coffee, paid for it with a piece of silver, and waited to light a cigarette before he went out.

Vincenzo sat still in the car, a model of patient impassivity, but he turned a hungry eye on his master as he came down the steps.

"You can go and get something to eat. I shall drive up to the Galleria di Sopra, and you must follow me there. You will find the car at the side of the road. Stay with it until I come, and if anyone asks questions you need not answer them."

Jean drove up the steep hill towards the lake. The rain was still heavy, and the squalid streets of the little town were running with mud. He turned to the left by the Calvary at the foot of the ilex avenue by the Capuchin church, and stopped the car some way further down the road. The lane the waiter had told him of was not hard to find. It was a narrow path between high walls of olive orchards; it led straight down to the lake, and the entrance to the Villino was quite close to the water's edge. Nothing could be seen of it from the lane but the name painted on the gate-posts [288] and one glimpse of a shuttered window, forlorn and viewless as a blind eye, and half hidden by flowering laurels. Jean looked at his watch. It was ten minutes to twelve, and she had written "after noon," but he could not be sure that she had not come already, and since he had heard the name of Tor di Rocca he was more than ever anxious to be with her.

He tried the gate but it was locked; there was nothing for it but to climb the wall, and as he was light and active he scrambled over without much difficulty and landed in a green tangle of roses and wild vines. He knocked at the house door, and stood for a while listening to the empty answering echoes and to the drip-drip of rain from the eaves. Evidently there was no one there. He drew back into the shrubberies; great showers of drops were shaken down on him from the gold-powdered mimosa blossoms that met above his head; he shook himself impatiently, like a dog that is disturbed while on guard. From where he stood he could see the gate and the grass-grown path that led from it to the house. The time passed very slowly. He looked at his watch four times in the next fifteen minutes, and he was beginning to wonder if he had not left Florence on a fool's errand when Olive came.

He saw her fumbling with the key; it was hard to turn in the rusty lock, and she had to close her [289] umbrella and stand it against the wall so as to have both hands free. The gate swung open slowly, creaking on its warped hinges. Jean noticed that she left it unlatched and that she looked back over her shoulder twice as she came down the path, as though she thought someone might be following her.

She opened the house door with a key she had and went in, and he came after her. He stood for a moment on the threshold listening. She was hurrying from room to room, opening the shutters and the windows and letting in the light and air; the doors banged after her, and muslin curtains flapped like wings as the wind blew them.

His heart was beating so that he thought she must hear it before she saw him, before his step sounded in the passage. As he came in she gave a sort of little cry and ran to him, and he put his arms about her and kissed her again and again; her dear lips that were wet and cold with rain, her soft brown hair, the curves of cheek and chin that were as sweet to feel as to see. One small hand held the lapel of his coat, and he was pleasantly aware of the other being laid about his neck. She had wanted him so much—and he had come.

"Thank God, you are here, Jean. Oh, if you knew how frightened I have been."

He kissed her once more, and then, framing her face with his hands, he looked down into her [290] eyes. The blue eyes yearned to his, but there was fear in them still, and he saw the colour he had

brought into her cheeks fading.

“I am not worth all the trouble I have given you.”

“Perhaps not,” he said, smiling. “Hilaire sent you a long message, but I want to hear what we are supposed to be doing here first.”

“Dear Hilaire!... Jean, you won’t be angry?”

“I don’t promise anything,” he said. “I shall probably be furious. But in any case, if it is going to be a long story we may as well make ourselves at home.”

“Not here! I must tell you quickly, before he comes.”

He noticed that she looked towards the door, and he understood that she was listening fearfully for the creaking of the gate, the sound of footsteps on the path outside, the turning of the key in the lock.

“Tor di Rocca, I suppose? When is he coming?”

“Between one and two.”

“We have at least half an hour then,” he said comfortably, and drew her closer to him with his arm about her shoulders.

“When I first came to Rome I tried for weeks to get something to do, but no one seemed to want lessons. Then one day Signora Aurelia’s sister told me how poor she was. She cried, and I was [291] very much upset because I felt I was a burden, and that very afternoon I found out a way of making money ... Jean, you won’t be angry?”

“No, dearest.”

“I became a model—” She paused, but he said nothing and she went on. “I sat for one man only after the first week, and he was always good and kind to me, always. He painted a picture of me —I think you would like it—and the day before yesterday he had a show of his work. A lot of people came. I did not see Prince Tor di Rocca, but he was there, and after a while he spoke to me. I had met him before and I understood from what he said that Mamie Whittaker had broken her engagement with him.

“The next morning M’sieur Camille had to go out, and I was alone in the studio when the Prince came in and tried to make love to me. I was frightened, and I screamed, and just then Camille returned, and he knocked him down. He got up again at once. Nothing much was said, and he went away, but I understood that they were going to fight. I went home and thought about it, and when I realised that one or other of them might be killed I felt I could not bear it.

“I am so afraid of death, Jean. I try to believe in a future life, but that will be different, and I want [292] the people I love in this one; just human, looking tired sometimes and shabby, or happy and pleased about things. I remember my mother had a blue hat that suited her, and I can’t think of it now without tears, because I long to see her pinning it on before the glass and asking me if it is straight, and I suppose I shall never see or hear that again, even if we do meet in heaven. Death is so absolutely the end. If only people are alive distance and absence don’t really matter; there is always hope. And then, you know, Camille is so brilliant; it would be a loss to France, to the whole world, if he was killed.”

“What did you say his name was?”

“Camille Michelin.”

“I know him then. He came to me once in Paris, after a concert, and fell on my neck without an introduction. Afterwards he painted my portrait.”

“He is nice, isn’t he?” she said eagerly.

He assented. “Well, go on. You could not let them fight—”

“I went to see the Prince at his hotel, and I persuaded him to write a sort of apology.”

“You persuaded him. How?”

“Jean, that man is the exact opposite of the centurion’s servant; say ‘go’ and he stays, ‘don’t do it’ and he does it. And I once made the fatal mistake of telling him I could never love him. He did not [293] want me to before, but now— He is a spoilt boy who only cares for the fruit that is forbidden or withheld. It is the scaling of the orchard wall that he enjoys; if he could walk in by the gate in broad daylight I am sure he never would, or, at any rate, he would soon walk out again. I promised to come here alone to meet him, and not to tell Camille, and I have kept my promise. If you knew how frightened I was.... I thought you might be away, and that Hilaire perhaps could not come in your stead, though I knew he would if it were possible.”

The man left her then and went to the window, where he stood looking out upon the driving mist and rain that made the troubled waters of the lake seem grey, and shrouded all the wooded hills beyond.

“Suppose I had not come,” he said presently. “What would you have done?”

“You ask that?”

He turned upon her. “Yes,” he said hardly, “just that.”

She took a small pistol from the pocket of her loose sac coat and gave it to him.

“So you were going to shoot him? I thought—”

She tried to still the quivering of her lips. “No, myself. Oh, I am not really inconsistent. I told you I was afraid of death. I will say all now and have done; I am afraid of life too, with its long slow [294] pains, and most of all of what men call love. I don’t want to go on,” she cried hysterically. “I am sick. I don’t want to see, or hear, or feel anything any more. I have had enough. All this year I have struggled, and people have been kind; but friendship is a poor, weak thing, and love—love is hateful.”

She hid her face in her hands.

“Rubbish!” he said, and then, in a changed voice, “My darling, you will be better soon. I must get you away from here.”

Gently he drew her hands away from her face and lifted them to his lips; the soft palms were wet with tears.

They were standing on the threshold of an inner room. “You can go in here until I have done with Tor di Rocca,” he said. “But first I must tell you that Gertrude has written to me asking me to get a divorce. There is a man, of course, and the case will not be defended. Olive, will you marry me when I am free?”

“Oh, Jean, I—I am so glad.”

“You will marry me then?” he insisted.

“How thin you are, my dear. Just a very nice bag of bones. Were—were you sorry when I came away?”

“You little torment,” he said. “Answer me.”

“Ask again. I want to hear.” [295]

“Will you marry me?”

“Yes, of course.”

A nightingale began to sing in the garden; broken notes, a mere echo of what the stars heard at night, but infinitely sweet as the soul of a rose made audible; and as he sang a sudden ray of sunshine shot the grey rain with silver. It seemed to Jean that rose-sweetness was all about him in this his short triumph of love; that a flower’s heart beat against his own, that a flower’s lips caressed the lean darkness of his cheek. There were threads of gold in the soft brown tangle of hair—gold unalloyed as was the hard-won happiness that made him feel himself invincible, panoplied in an armour of joy that should defend them from all slings and arrows. He was happy, and so the world seemed full of music; there was harmony in the swaying of tall dark cypresses, moved by winds that strewed the grass with torn petals of orange blossoms from the trees by the lake side, in the clouds’ processional, in the patter of rain on the green shining laurel leaves.

Laurels—his laurels had been woven in with rue, and latterly with rosemary for dear remembrance; he had never cared greatly for his fame and it seemed worthless to him now that he had realised his dream and gathered his rose.

He was impatient to be gone, to take the woman he loved out of this house of sad memories, of [296] empty echoes, of dust and rust and decay. Already he seemed to feel the rush of the cold night air, to hear the roar of Arno, hurrying to the sea, above the steady throbbing of the car; to see the welcoming lights of home shining out of the dark at the steep edge of the hills above Settignano.

“About the Prince,” he said presently. “Am I to fight him?”

She started. “Oh, no! That would be worse than ever. I thought you were too English for that,” she said naïvely.

He smiled. “Well, perhaps I am, but I suppose there may be a bit of a scuffle. You won’t mind that?”

“I don’t know,” she said helplessly.

A moment later they heard the gate creak as it swung on its hinges. “He is coming.”

They kissed hurriedly, with, on her side, a passion of farewell, and he would have made her go into the room beyond, but she clung to him, crying incoherently. “No ... no ... together ...”

Tor di Rocca stopped short by the door; the smile that had been in his hot eyes as they met Olive’s faded, and the short, Neronic upper lip lifted in a sort of snarl.

“I don’t quite understand,” he said. “How did you come here? This is my house, Avenel.”

“I know it, and I do not wish to trespass on your hospitality. You will excuse us?” [297]

But the Prince stood in the way. “I am not a child to be played with. I’ll not let her go. You may leave us, however,” he added, and he stood aside as though to let him pass.

Jean met his angry eyes. “The lady is unwilling. Let that be the end,” he said quietly.

Olive watched the Italian fearfully; his face was writhen, and all semblance of beauty had gone out of it; its gnawing, tearing, animal ferocity was appalling. When he called to her she moved instinctively nearer to Jean, and then with the swift prescience of love threw herself on his breast, tried to shelter him, as the other drew his revolver and fired.

Jean had his arm about her, but he let her slip now and fall in a huddled heap at his feet. She was safer there, and out of the way. The two men exchanged several shots, but Jean’s went wide; he was hampered by his heavy motor coat, and the second bullet had scored its way through his flesh before he could get at his weapon; there were four in his body when he dropped.

Tor di Rocca leant against the wall; he was unhurt, but he felt a little faint and sick for the moment. Hurriedly he rehearsed what he should say to the *Questore* presently. He had met the [298] girl in this house of his; Avenel, her lover, had broken in upon them; he had shot her and fired at the Prince himself, but without effect, and he had killed him in self-defence.

That was plain enough, but it was essential that his should be the only version, and when the smoke cleared away he crossed the room to look at the two who must speak no word, and to make sure.

The man was still alive for all the lead in him; Tor di Rocca watched, with a sort of cruel, boyish interest in the creature he had maimed, as slowly, painfully, Jean dragged himself a little nearer to where the girl lay, tried to rise, and fell heavily. Surely he was dead now—but no; his hands still clawed at the carpet, and when Tor di Rocca stamped on his fingers he moaned as he tried to draw them away. Olive lived too, but her breathing was so faint that it would be easily stifled; the pressure of his hand even, but Filippo shrank from that. He could not touch the flesh that would be dust presently because of him. He hesitated, and then, muttering to himself, went to take one of the cushions from the window seat.

Out in the garden the nightingale had not ceased to sing; the cypresses swayed in the winds that shook the promise of fruit from the trees; the green and rose and gold of a rainbow made fair the [299] clouds’ processional. The world was still full of music, of transitory life and joy, of dreams that have an ending.

---

## CHAPTER IX [300]

“*Via!*” said Vincenzo, and his black, oily forefinger, uplifted, gave emphasis to his words. “There are no such things as ghosts. This princess of yours cannot be seen at moonrise, or at any other time.”

There is no room for faith in the swelled head of young Italy, but the waiter was a middle-aged man. He paused in the act of re-filling the customer’s cup. “You do not believe, then?”

The Tuscan looked at him with all the scarcely-veiled contempt of the North for the South. “You tell me you are a Calabrian. *Si vede!* You listen to all the priests say; you go down on your knees in the mud when the *frati* are carrying a wax doll about the roads; you think a splinter of bone from the ribs of some fool who would not enjoy life while it lasted will cure a dropsy or a broken leg; you hope the rain will stop because a holy toe-nail is exposed on the altar. Ghosts, visions, miracles!”

Vincenzo Torrigiani was the son of a stone-cutter in the village of Settignano, and he had worked as a boy in the gardens of the Villa Fiorelli. After a while the master had noticed and had taken a [301] fancy to him, chiefly on account of his ever-ready and unusually dazzling and expansive smile, and he had been sent to a garage in Milan for six months. The quick-witted Florentine learned a great many things in a short time besides the necessary smattering of mechanics and the management of cars, and on his return he displayed many new airs and graces in addition, fortunately, to the same old smile. Later on he spent the obligatory two years in barracks, in a regiment of Bersaglieri, and came back to Avenel’s service plus a still more varied knowledge of the world, a waxed moustache, and a superficial tendency to atheism. He was always delighted to air his views, and he fixed the shocked waiter now with a glittering eye as he proceeded to recite his unbelief at some length.

“God is merely man’s idea of himself at his best, and the devil is his idea of other people at their worst,” he concluded.

“Would you spend a night alone in this haunted house?”

“*Sicuro!*”

“Perhaps you will have to if your master takes the place. He has gone to look at it.”

Vincenzo gulped down the last of his coffee. “I must go,” he said, but he was much too Italian to understand that a man in a hurry need not count his change twice over or bite every piece of [302]

silver to make sure of it.

It was nearly one o'clock when, having outdistanced the pack of beggars that followed at his heels through the narrow streets of the town, he came out upon the broad, tree-shadowed upper road. He had stopped for a moment in the shelter of the high wall of the Capuchin convent to light a cigarette, and thereafter he went on unseeingly, in a brown study. Had he or had he not paid two soldi more than he should have done for the packet? A Calabrian would cheat, if possible, of course.

When, after much mental arithmetic, Vincenzo solved the problem to his own satisfaction the little scrap of bad tobacco in its paper lining was smoked out. He looked at his watch, a Christmas present from Jean, and seeing that it was past the hour he began to wonder. There were no ghosts, and in any case they were not dangerous in broad daylight. There were no ghosts, but what was the signorino doing all this while in an empty house? The car was there, drawn up at the side of the road under the trees, and Vincenzo fussed round it, pulling the tarpaulin covers more over the seats; he had them in place when it occurred to him to look underneath for the fur rug. It was not there.

"*Dio mio!*" he cried excitedly. "It has been stolen."

Someone passing by must have seen it and taken it, probably someone with a cart, as it would be heavy to carry. The thief could not have gone far, and Vincenzo thought that if he drove the car towards Castel Gandolfo he might catch him, whoever he was—charcoal-burner from the woods beyond Rocca di Papa, peasant carting barrels of Frascati wine, or perhaps a *frate* from the convent. However, he dared not attempt it as the signorino had said "Wait." [303]

After a few minutes of miserable uncertainty, during which he invoked the assistance of the saints—"*Che fare! Che fare! Santa Vergine, aiutatemi!*" he decided to go and find the signorino himself. He was half way down the lane when he heard shots. He had been hurrying, but he began to run then, and the last echo had not died away when he reached the gate of the Villino. It creaked on its hinges as he passed in, but no one in the house was listening for it now. He went in at the door, and now he was very swift and silent, very intent. There was a smell of powder in the passage, and someone was moving about in the room beyond. Vincenzo felt for the long sharp knife in his hip pocket before he softly turned the handle of the door.

"Signore! What has happened?"

Filippo Tor di Rocca started violently and uttered a sort of cry as he turned to see the man who stood on the threshold staring at him. There was a queer silence before he spoke, moistening his lips at almost every word. [304]

"I—I—you heard shots, I suppose."

The servant's quick eyes noted the recent disorder of the room: chairs overturned, white splinters of plaster fallen from the ceiling, a mirror broken. Into what trap had his master fallen? What was there hidden behind the table—on the floor? There were scrabbled finger-marks—red marks—in the dust.

"I was here with a lady whom I wished to take this house when a man burst in upon us. He shot her, and tried to shoot me, and I drew upon him in self-defence." The Prince spoke haltingly. He had not been prepared to lie so soon.

"What are you doing with that cushion?"

Filippo looked down guiltily at the frilled thing he held. "I was going to put it under her head," he began, but the other was not listening. He had come forward into the room and he had seen. The huddled heap of black and grey close at the Prince's feet was human—a woman—and he knew the young pale face, veiled as it was in brown, loosened hair threaded with gold. A woman; and the man who lay there too, his dark head resting on her breast, his lips laid against her throat, was his master, Jean Avenel.

He uttered a hoarse cry of rage. "Murderer! You did it!"

But Tor di Rocca had recovered himself somewhat and the bold, hard face was a mask through which the red eyes gleamed wickedly. "Fool!" he answered impatiently. "It was as I said. The man was mad with jealousy. There is his pistol on the floor. I am going now to inform the authorities and to fetch the *carabinieri*." [305]

He went out, and Vincenzo did not try to prevent him.

"Signorino! signorino! answer me. *Madonna benedetta!* What shall I say to Ser 'Ilario?" The little man's face worked, and tears ran down his cheeks as he knelt there at his master's side, stooping to feel for the fluttering of the faint breath, the beating of the pulse of life. Surely there was no mortal wound—the shoulder—yes; and the side, and the right arm, since all the sleeve was soaked in warm blood.

All those who have been dragged down into the great darkness that shrouds the gate of Death know that the first sense vouchsafed to the returning soul is that of hearing. There was a sound of the sea in Jean's ears, a weary sound of wailing and distress, through which words came presently by ones and twos and threes. Words that seemed a long way off, and yet near, as though they were stones dropped upon him from a great height: ... signorina ... not mortal ...

healed ... care ... twenty masses to the Madonna at the *Santissima Annunziata* ...

Sight came next as the sea that had roared about him seemed to ebb, leaving him still on the [306] shore of this world. He opened his eyes and lay for a moment staring up at the white ceiling until full consciousness returned, and with it the sharp, stabbing pain of his wounds, the acrid taste of blood in his mouth, the remembrance of love. Olive.... Had he not tried to reach her and failed? He groaned as he turned his aching head now on the pillow to see her where she lay.

Vincenzo had cared for his master, had slit up that red, wet sleeve with his sharp knife, and had bandaged the torn flesh as well as he was able; and now, very gently, but without any skill, he was fumbling at the girl's breast.

Jean made an effort to speak but his lips made no intelligible sounds at first. The servant came running to him joyfully nevertheless. "Signorino! You are better?"

The kind brown eyes smiled through the dimness of their pain.

"Good Vincenzo ... well done. She ... she's not dead?"

"Oh, no, signorino—at least—I am not sure," the man faltered.

"The wound is near the heart, is it not? Lay her down here beside me and I will keep it closed with my hand," Jean said faintly. "Lift her and lay her down here in the hollow of my unhurt arm."

"No ... no!" she had cried. "Together." No other man should touch her—if she died it must be in [307] his arms. How still she was, how little warmth of life was there to cherish, how small a fluttering of the dear heart under his hand's pressure....

"Go now and get help."

Vincenzo made no answer, but his eyes were like those of a faithful dog, anguished, appealing, and he knelt to kiss the poor fingers that had been bruised under that cruel heel before he went out of the room.

Very softly he closed and locked the door, and then stood for a while in the close darkness of the passage, listening. That devil—he wanted them to die—suppose he should be lurking somewhere about the house, waiting for the servant to go that he might finish his work.

The Tor di Rocca were hard and swift and cruel as steel. That Duchess Veronica, who had brought her husband the other woman's severed head, wrapped in fine linen of her own weaving, as a New Year's gift!—she had been one of them. Then there had lived one Filippo who kept his younger brother chained up to the wall of some inner room of his Florentine palace for seventeen years, until, at last, a serving-man dared to go and tell of the sound of blows in the night hours, the moaning, the clank of a chain, and the people broke in, and hanged the Prince from the wrought-iron *fanale* outside his own gate.

Vincenzo knew of all these old, past horrors; the Florentines had made ballads of them, and sang [308] them in the streets, and one might buy "*L'Assassina*," or "*Il Fratello del Principe*," printed on little sheets of coarse paper, on the stalls in the Mercato, for one soldo. So, though the house was very still, the little man drew his long knife and read the motto scratched on the blade before he climbed the stairs.

"*Non ti fidar a me se il cor ti manca.*"

Hurriedly he passed through every room, but there was no one there, and so he ran out into the dripping green wilderness of torn leaves and storm-tossed, drenched blossoms, and up the lane, between the high walls of the olive orchards, to the town.

Don Filippo was really gone, and he was waiting now on the platform of the Albano station for the train that should take him back to Rome. He was not, however, presenting the spectacle of the murderer fleeing from his crime. He was quite calm. The heat and cruelty of the Tor di Rocca blood flared in him, but it burned with no steady flame. He had not the tenacity of his forefathers; and so, though he might kill his brother, he would not care to torment him during long years. Hate palled on him as quickly as love. He was content to leave the lives of Jean Avenel and of Olive on the knees of the gods.

There was no pity, no tenderness in him to be stirred by the remembrance of blue eyes dilated [309] with fear, of loosened brown hair, of the small thing that had lain in a huddled heap at his feet, and he was not afraid of any consequences affecting him. In Italy the plea of jealousy covers a multitude of sins, and he was sure that a jury would acquit him if he were charged with murder.

How many hundred years had passed since Pilate had called for water to wash his hands! Filippo —reminded in some way of the Roman governor—felt that same need. His hands were not clean—there was dust on them—and it seemed that the one thing that really might clog his thoughts and tarnish them later on was the dust on a frilled cushion.

---

## CHAPTER X [310]

To some men their world is most precious when their arms may compass it. These are the great

lovers. It seemed to Jean now that it mattered little whether this grey hour of rain and silence preluded life or death. Presently they would come to the edge of the stream called Lethe, and then he, making a cup of his hands, would give the woman he loved to drink of the waters of forgetfulness, and all remembrance of loneliness and tears, and of the pain that ached now in his side and in her shot breast would pass away.

He looked down from a great height and saw:

"*the curled moon*
*Was like a little feather*
*Fluttering far down the gulf;*"

and the round world, a caught fly, wrapped in a web of clouds, hung by a slender thread of some huge spider's spinning. There was a dark mark upon it that spread and reddened until it seemed to be a stain of blood on a woman's breast. She had been pale, but the colour had come again when he had kissed her. It was gone now. Was it all in the red that oozed between his fingers? [311]

In the twilight of his senses stray thoughts fluttered and passed like white moths. Was that the roar of voices? The hall was full and they wanted him, but he could not play again. Love was best. He would stay in the garden with Olive.

What were they asking for? A nocturne—yes; it was getting dark, and the sea was rising—that was the sound of the sea.

The doctor Vincenzo had brought in rose from his knees and stood thoughtfully wiping his hands on a piece of lint.

"We must see about extracting the bullets later on. One went clean through his arm and so has saved us the trouble. As to her—I am not sure—but I think the injury may not be so serious as it now appears. She was evidently stunned. She must have struck her head against the table in falling."

"Can they be moved?" the servant asked anxiously. "My master would not care to stay on here. Can you take them into your house, and—and not say anything?"

The doctor hesitated. He was a bald, grey-whiskered man, fat and flaccid. His cuffs were frayed and there were wine-stains on his shabby clothes. He was very poor.

"I should inform the authorities," he said.

"Oh, I don't think that is necessary. It would be worth your while not to." [312]

Jean's fur coat had been thrown across a chair. The doctor eyed it carefully. It was worth more lire than he had ever possessed at one time.

"Very well," he said. "The vineyard across the lane is mine. We can go to my house that way and take them through the gate without ever coming out on to the road. I will go and tell my housekeeper to get the rooms ready."

Vincenzo's face brightened. "I will go in the car to-night to fetch the master's brother. He is very rich. It will be worth your while," he repeated.

"He will be heavy to carry. Shall we be able to do it alone?"

"*Via!*" cried the little man. "I am very strong. Go now and come back soon."

When the other had left the room he crouched down again on the floor at Jean's feet. "Signorino! Signorino! Speak to me! Look at me!"

But there was no voice now, nor any that answered.

For a long while, it seemed, Jean was a spent swimmer, struggling to reach a distant shore. The cruel cross-currents drew him, great waves buffeted him, and the worst of it was they were hot. All the sea was bubbling and boiling about him, and the sound in his ears was like the roar of [313] steam. There were creatures in the water, too; octopi, such as he had seen caught in nets by the Venetian fishermen and flung on the yellow sands of the Lido. He saw their tentacles flickering in the green curled edges of each wave that threatened to beat him down into the depths.

Vincenzo kept them off. He was always there, sitting by the door, and when he was called he came running to his master's bedside.

"Where is she? Don't let her be drowned! Don't let the octopi get her! Vincenzo! Vincenzo!" he cried, and the good fellow tried to reassure him.

"*Sia benedetto*, signorino! They shall not have her. I will cut them in pieces with my knife."

"What is the matter? I am quite well. Is it only the tyre? There is Orvieto, and the sun just risen. Is it still raining?"

“No, signorino. The sun shines and it has not rained for days. It will soon be May.”

Very slowly the tide of feverish dreams ebbed, and Jean became aware of the iris pattern on the curtains of the bed; of the ray of sunlight that danced every morning on the ceiling and passed away; of the old woman who gave him his medicine. She was kind, and he liked to see her sitting sewing by lamplight, and to watch her distorted shadow looming gigantic in an angle of the wall. [314] Hilaire was there too, but sometimes he was called away, and then Jean would hear his uneven step going to and fro across an uncarpeted floor, and the sound of hushed voices in the next room.

“Hilaire, is—is it all right?”

“Yes, do not be afraid. Get well,” the elder man answered, but Jean still lay with his face turned to the wall. He was afraid. The longing to see Olive, to hold her once more in his arms, burned within him. He moved restlessly and laid his clenched hands together on the half-healed wound in his side.

One night he slept soundly, dreamlessly, as a child sleeps, and woke at dawn. He raised himself on his elbow in the bed and looked about him, and Vincenzo came to him at once and asked him what he wanted.

“Go out,” he said, “and leave me alone for a while.”

The green painted window-shutter was unfastened, and it swung open in the little wind that had sprung up. Jean saw the morning star shining, and the widening rift of pale gold in the grey sky above the hills. He heard the stirring of awakened life. Birds fluttered in the laurels. A boy was singing as he went to his work among the vines by the lake side:

“*Ho da dirti tante cose.*”

It seemed to Jean that he too had many things to say to the woman he loved. He called to her [315] faintly, in a weak, hoarse voice: “Olive!”

After a while he heard her answering him from the next room.

“Jean! Oh, Jean!”

He lay still, smiling.

EDINBURGH
COLSTON AND CO. LIMITED
PRINTERS

---

and brilliantly imagined story."

The *Daily Chronicle* says: "Many able authors, an unaccountable number, have written about the South Sea Islands, but none that we know has written so charmingly as Mr. de Vere Stacpoole in 'The Blue Lagoon.'"

T. FISHER UNWIN, 1 ADELPHI TERRACE, LONDON

---

T. FISHER UNWIN, Publisher,

WORKS BY JOSEPH CONRAD

I.

# AN OUTCAST OF THE ISLANDS

*Crown 8vo., cloth*, **6s.**

"Subject to the qualifications thus disposed of (*vide* first part of notice), 'An Outcast of the Islands' is perhaps the finest piece of fiction that has been published this year, as 'Almayer's Folly' was one of the finest that was published in 1895.... Surely this is real romance—the romance that is real. Space forbids anything but the merest recapitulation of the other living realities of Mr. Conrad's invention—of Lingard, of the inimitable Almayer, the one-eyed Babalatchi, the Naturalist, of the pious Abdulla—all novel, all authentic. Enough has been written to show Mr. Conrad's quality. He imagines his scenes and their sequence like a master; he knows his individualities and their hearts; he has a new and wonderful field in this East Indian Novel of his.... Greatness is deliberately written; the present writer has read and re-read his two books, and after putting this review aside for some days to consider the discretion of it, the word still stands."—*Saturday Review*

II.

# ALMAYER'S FOLLY

*Second Edition. Crown 8vo., cloth*, **6s.**

"This startling, unique, splendid book."

Mr. T. P. O'Connor, M.P.

"This is a decidedly powerful story of an uncommon type, and breaks fresh ground in fiction.... All the leading characters in the book—Almayer, his wife, his daughter, and Dain, the daughter's native lover—are well drawn, and the parting between father and daughter has a pathetic naturalness about it, unspoiled by straining after effect. There are, too, some admirably graphic passages in the book. The approach of a monsoon is most effectively described.... The name of Mr. Joseph Conrad is new to us, but it appears to us as if he might become the Kipling of the Malay Archipelago."—*Spectator*

---

# THE BEETLE. A MYSTERY

By **RICHARD MARSH**. Illustrated.

Eleventh Edition. 6s.

The *Daily Graphic* says: “‘The Beetle’ is the kind of book which you put down only for the purpose of turning up the gas and making sure that no person or thing is standing behind your chair, and it is a book which no one will put down until finished except for the reason above described.”

The *Speaker* says: “A story of the most terrific kind is duly recorded in this extremely powerful book. The skill with which its fantastic horrors are presented to us is undeniable.”

T. FISHER UNWIN, 1 ADELPHI TERRACE, LONDON

**Transcriber's Note**

Text in languages other than English is preserved as printed.

Minor punctuation errors have been repaired.

The following amendments have been made:

Page 164—Jocopo amended to Jacopo—"... one of the old houses in the Borgo San Jacopo, ..."

Page 197—mysogynists amended to misogynists—"Olive laughed. “Commend me to misogynists henceforth.”"

Page 216—newsvenders amended to newsvendors—"... and the narrow streets were echoing now to the hoarse cries of the newsvendors ..."

Page 228—Babbuino amended to Babuino—"They went by way of the Via Babuino across the Piazza di Spagna, ..."

Page 293—anyrate amended to any rate—"... I am sure he never would, or, at any rate, he would ..."

Page 297—it's amended to its—"... its gnawing, tearing, animal ferocity was appalling."

Second advert page—decidely amended to decidedly—"This is a decidedly powerful story ..."

you have read, understand, agree to and accept all the terms of this license and intellectual property (trademark/copyright) agreement. If you do not agree to abide by all the terms of this agreement, you must cease using and return or destroy all copies of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works in your possession. If you paid a fee for obtaining a copy of or access to a Project Gutenberg™ electronic work and you do not agree to be bound by the terms of this agreement, you may obtain a refund from the person or entity to whom you paid the fee as set forth in paragraph 1.E.8.

1.B. “Project Gutenberg” is a registered trademark. It may only be used on or associated in any way with an electronic work by people who agree to be bound by the terms of this agreement. There are a few things that you can do with most Project Gutenberg™ electronic works even without complying with the full terms of this agreement. See paragraph 1.C below. There are a lot of things you can do with Project Gutenberg™ electronic works if you follow the terms of this agreement and help preserve free future access to Project Gutenberg™ electronic works. See paragraph 1.E below.

1.C. The Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation (“the Foundation” or PGLAF), owns a compilation copyright in the collection of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works. Nearly all the individual works in the collection are in the public domain in the United States. If an individual work is unprotected by copyright law in the United States and you are located in the United States, we do not claim a right to prevent you from copying, distributing, performing, displaying or creating derivative works based on the work as long as all references to Project Gutenberg are removed. Of course, we hope that you will support the Project Gutenberg™ mission of promoting free access to electronic works by freely sharing Project Gutenberg™ works in compliance with the terms of this agreement for keeping the Project Gutenberg™ name associated with the work. You can easily comply with the terms of this agreement by keeping this work in the same format with its attached full Project Gutenberg™ License when you share it without charge with others.

1.D. The copyright laws of the place where you are located also govern what you can do with this work. Copyright laws in most countries are in a constant state of change. If you are outside the United States, check the laws of your country in addition to the terms of this agreement before downloading, copying, displaying, performing, distributing or creating derivative works based on this work or any other Project Gutenberg™ work. The Foundation makes no representations concerning the copyright status of any work in any country other than the United States.

1.E. Unless you have removed all references to Project Gutenberg:

1.E.1. The following sentence, with active links to, or other immediate access to, the full Project Gutenberg™ License must appear prominently whenever any copy of a Project Gutenberg™ work (any work on which the phrase “Project Gutenberg” appears, or with which the phrase “Project Gutenberg” is associated) is accessed, displayed, performed, viewed, copied or distributed:

> This eBook is for the use of anyone anywhere in the United States and most other parts of the world at no cost and with almost no restrictions whatsoever. You may copy it, give it away or re-use it under the terms of the Project Gutenberg License included with this eBook or online at www.gutenberg.org. If you are not located in the United States, you will have to check the laws of the country where you are located before using this eBook.

1.E.2. If an individual Project Gutenberg™ electronic work is derived from texts not protected by U.S. copyright law (does not contain a notice indicating that it is posted with permission of the copyright holder), the work can be copied and distributed to anyone in the United States without paying any fees or charges. If you are redistributing or providing access to a work with the phrase “Project Gutenberg” associated with or appearing on the work, you must comply either with the requirements of paragraphs 1.E.1 through 1.E.7 or obtain permission for the use of the work and the Project Gutenberg™ trademark as set forth in paragraphs 1.E.8 or 1.E.9.

1.E.3. If an individual Project Gutenberg™ electronic work is posted with the permission of the copyright holder, your use and distribution must comply with both paragraphs 1.E.1 through 1.E.7 and any additional terms imposed by the copyright holder. Additional terms will be linked to the Project Gutenberg™ License for all works posted with the permission of the copyright holder found at the beginning of this work.

1.E.4. Do not unlink or detach or remove the full Project Gutenberg™ License terms from this work, or any files containing a part of this work or any other work associated with Project Gutenberg™.

1.E.5. Do not copy, display, perform, distribute or redistribute this electronic work, or any part of this electronic work, without prominently displaying the sentence set forth in paragraph 1.E.1 with active links or immediate access to the full terms of the Project Gutenberg™ License.

1.E.6. You may convert to and distribute this work in any binary, compressed, marked up, nonproprietary or proprietary form, including any word processing or hypertext form. However, if you provide access to or distribute copies of a Project Gutenberg™ work in a format other than “Plain Vanilla ASCII” or other format used in the official version posted on the official Project Gutenberg™ website (www.gutenberg.org), you must, at no additional cost, fee or expense to the

user, provide a copy, a means of exporting a copy, or a means of obtaining a copy upon request, of the work in its original “Plain Vanilla ASCII” or other form. Any alternate format must include the full Project Gutenberg™ License as specified in paragraph 1.E.1.

1.E.7. Do not charge a fee for access to, viewing, displaying, performing, copying or distributing any Project Gutenberg™ works unless you comply with paragraph 1.E.8 or 1.E.9.

1.E.8. You may charge a reasonable fee for copies of or providing access to or distributing Project Gutenberg™ electronic works provided that:

- You pay a royalty fee of 20% of the gross profits you derive from the use of Project Gutenberg™ works calculated using the method you already use to calculate your applicable taxes. The fee is owed to the owner of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark, but he has agreed to donate royalties under this paragraph to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation. Royalty payments must be paid within 60 days following each date on which you prepare (or are legally required to prepare) your periodic tax returns. Royalty payments should be clearly marked as such and sent to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation at the address specified in Section 4, “Information about donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation.”
- You provide a full refund of any money paid by a user who notifies you in writing (or by e-mail) within 30 days of receipt that s/he does not agree to the terms of the full Project Gutenberg™ License. You must require such a user to return or destroy all copies of the works possessed in a physical medium and discontinue all use of and all access to other copies of Project Gutenberg™ works.
- You provide, in accordance with paragraph 1.F.3, a full refund of any money paid for a work or a replacement copy, if a defect in the electronic work is discovered and reported to you within 90 days of receipt of the work.
- You comply with all other terms of this agreement for free distribution of Project Gutenberg™ works.

1.E.9. If you wish to charge a fee or distribute a Project Gutenberg™ electronic work or group of works on different terms than are set forth in this agreement, you must obtain permission in writing from the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, the manager of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark. Contact the Foundation as set forth in Section 3 below.

1.F.

1.F.1. Project Gutenberg volunteers and employees expend considerable effort to identify, do copyright research on, transcribe and proofread works not protected by U.S. copyright law in creating the Project Gutenberg™ collection. Despite these efforts, Project Gutenberg™ electronic works, and the medium on which they may be stored, may contain “Defects,” such as, but not limited to, incomplete, inaccurate or corrupt data, transcription errors, a copyright or other intellectual property infringement, a defective or damaged disk or other medium, a computer virus, or computer codes that damage or cannot be read by your equipment.

1.F.2. LIMITED WARRANTY, DISCLAIMER OF DAMAGES - Except for the “Right of Replacement or Refund” described in paragraph 1.F.3, the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, the owner of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark, and any other party distributing a Project Gutenberg™ electronic work under this agreement, disclaim all liability to you for damages, costs and expenses, including legal fees. YOU AGREE THAT YOU HAVE NO REMEDIES FOR NEGLIGENCE, STRICT LIABILITY, BREACH OF WARRANTY OR BREACH OF CONTRACT EXCEPT THOSE PROVIDED IN PARAGRAPH 1.F.3. YOU AGREE THAT THE FOUNDATION, THE TRADEMARK OWNER, AND ANY DISTRIBUTOR UNDER THIS AGREEMENT WILL NOT BE LIABLE TO YOU FOR ACTUAL, DIRECT, INDIRECT, CONSEQUENTIAL, PUNITIVE OR INCIDENTAL DAMAGES EVEN IF YOU GIVE NOTICE OF THE POSSIBILITY OF SUCH DAMAGE.

1.F.3. LIMITED RIGHT OF REPLACEMENT OR REFUND - If you discover a defect in this electronic work within 90 days of receiving it, you can receive a refund of the money (if any) you paid for it by sending a written explanation to the person you received the work from. If you received the work on a physical medium, you must return the medium with your written explanation. The person or entity that provided you with the defective work may elect to provide a replacement copy in lieu of a refund. If you received the work electronically, the person or entity providing it to you may choose to give you a second opportunity to receive the work electronically in lieu of a refund. If the second copy is also defective, you may demand a refund in writing without further opportunities to fix the problem.

1.F.4. Except for the limited right of replacement or refund set forth in paragraph 1.F.3, this work is provided to you ‘AS-IS’, WITH NO OTHER WARRANTIES OF ANY KIND, EXPRESS OR IMPLIED, INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO WARRANTIES OF MERCHANTABILITY OR FITNESS FOR ANY PURPOSE.

1.F.5. Some states do not allow disclaimers of certain implied warranties or the exclusion or limitation of certain types of damages. If any disclaimer or limitation set forth in this agreement violates the law of the state applicable to this agreement, the agreement shall be interpreted to make the maximum disclaimer or limitation permitted by the applicable state law. The invalidity or unenforceability of any provision of this agreement shall not void the remaining provisions.

1.F.6. INDEMNITY - You agree to indemnify and hold the Foundation, the trademark owner, any agent or employee of the Foundation, anyone providing copies of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works in accordance with this agreement, and any volunteers associated with the production, promotion and distribution of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works, harmless from all liability, costs and expenses, including legal fees, that arise directly or indirectly from any of the following which you do or cause to occur: (a) distribution of this or any Project Gutenberg™ work, (b) alteration, modification, or additions or deletions to any Project Gutenberg™ work, and (c) any Defect you cause.

## Section 2. Information about the Mission of Project Gutenberg™

Project Gutenberg™ is synonymous with the free distribution of electronic works in formats readable by the widest variety of computers including obsolete, old, middle-aged and new computers. It exists because of the efforts of hundreds of volunteers and donations from people in all walks of life.

Volunteers and financial support to provide volunteers with the assistance they need are critical to reaching Project Gutenberg™'s goals and ensuring that the Project Gutenberg™ collection will remain freely available for generations to come. In 2001, the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation was created to provide a secure and permanent future for Project Gutenberg™ and future generations. To learn more about the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation and how your efforts and donations can help, see Sections 3 and 4 and the Foundation information page at www.gutenberg.org.

## Section 3. Information about the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation

The Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation is a non-profit 501(c)(3) educational corporation organized under the laws of the state of Mississippi and granted tax exempt status by the Internal Revenue Service. The Foundation's EIN or federal tax identification number is 64-6221541. Contributions to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation are tax deductible to the full extent permitted by U.S. federal laws and your state's laws.

The Foundation's business office is located at 809 North 1500 West, Salt Lake City, UT 84116, (801) 596-1887. Email contact links and up to date contact information can be found at the Foundation's website and official page at www.gutenberg.org/contact

## Section 4. Information about Donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation

Project Gutenberg™ depends upon and cannot survive without widespread public support and donations to carry out its mission of increasing the number of public domain and licensed works that can be freely distributed in machine-readable form accessible by the widest array of equipment including outdated equipment. Many small donations ($1 to $5,000) are particularly important to maintaining tax exempt status with the IRS.

The Foundation is committed to complying with the laws regulating charities and charitable donations in all 50 states of the United States. Compliance requirements are not uniform and it takes a considerable effort, much paperwork and many fees to meet and keep up with these requirements. We do not solicit donations in locations where we have not received written confirmation of compliance. To SEND DONATIONS or determine the status of compliance for any particular state visit www.gutenberg.org/donate.

While we cannot and do not solicit contributions from states where we have not met the solicitation requirements, we know of no prohibition against accepting unsolicited donations from donors in such states who approach us with offers to donate.

International donations are gratefully accepted, but we cannot make any statements concerning tax treatment of donations received from outside the United States. U.S. laws alone swamp our small staff.

Please check the Project Gutenberg web pages for current donation methods and addresses. Donations are accepted in a number of other ways including checks, online payments and credit card donations. To donate, please visit: www.gutenberg.org/donate

## Section 5. General Information About Project Gutenberg™ electronic works

Professor Michael S. Hart was the originator of the Project Gutenberg™ concept of a library of electronic works that could be freely shared with anyone. For forty years, he produced and distributed Project Gutenberg™ eBooks with only a loose network of volunteer support.

Project Gutenberg™ eBooks are often created from several printed editions, all of which are confirmed as not protected by copyright in the U.S. unless a copyright notice is included. Thus, we do not necessarily keep eBooks in compliance with any particular paper edition.

Most people start at our website which has the main PG search facility: www.gutenberg.org.

This website includes information about Project Gutenberg™, including how to make donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, how to help produce our new eBooks, and how to subscribe to our email newsletter to hear about new eBooks.